

EDUCATION SKILLS AND CULTURE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

(Council Chamber - Port Talbot Civic Centre)

Members Present:

6 June 2019

Chairperson: Councillor S.H.Reynolds

Vice Chairperson: Councillor R.Mizen

Councillors: M.Crowley, S. ap Dafydd, S.Harris, S.K.Hunt, D.Keogh, S.Miller, J.D.Morgan, R.Phillips, S.Renkes and D.Whitelock

Co-opted Voting Members: M.Caddick and L.Newman

Officers In Attendance C.Millis, C.Griffiths, D.Griffiths, S.James, W.Curtis, D.Holder, S.Wright, S.Curran and J.Woodman-Ralph

Invitees: Councillors A.R.Lockyer and P.A.Rees (Cabinet Members)

1. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

The following Members made declarations of interest at the commencement of the meeting:

Cllr. P.Rees Re: Report of the Head of Participation re the Draft Home to School Travel Policy 2020 as he has grandchildren who attend Welsh Medium Education.

Cllr. D. Whitelock Re: Report of the Head of Participation re the Draft Home to School Travel Policy 2020 as he has grandchildren who use the service.

M. Caddick Re; Report of the Head of Participation re the Draft Home to School Travel Policy 2020 as she has grandchildren who use the service.

2. **MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

That the minutes of the 29 November 2018 be approved subject to the addition of M. Caddick, Co-opted Member, to the attendance for that meeting.

That the minutes of the 11 April 2019 be approved subject to the following two amendments:

- That L.Newman, Co-opted Member, be added to the attendance for that meeting and
- In Declarations of Interest M.Caddick she is Governor of St Joseph Primary School and not St Joseph Comprehensive School as detailed in the circulated report.

(a) Afan Forest Park - Car Parking Charges

Members received an update on the impact of the increased car parking charges at Afan Forest Park as detailed in the circulated report.

Members asked how ad hoc enforcement was going to reduce the number of offenders when nearly half of the vehicles recorded entering the car park did not pay. It was explained that the data collected did not take into 45 season permit holders which included tenants and council staff but confirmed there was a number of vehicles not paying for parking and that the ad hoc enforcement would target key areas which should result in a reduction in offenders.

Discussion took place on the feedback received from tenants of the businesses within the park. Some negative impacts had been received but more data needed to be collected to enable the effects to be measured.

Members noted the report.

3. **GNOLL PARK**

The Committee received information on the impact on the increased charges as part of the Forward Financial Plan 18/19 at Gnoll Park as detailed in the circulated report.

Concern was expressed at the funfair being allowed to sell food at the detriment of the café sales during fun days. It was explained that discussions had taken place with the proprietors of the fun fair and they had agreed to pay an additional £1,000 on their licence agreement which runs until September 2020. In addition, the café continues to be well frequented and as a result it would be difficult to identify a detrimental effect on sales as a result of the fun fair providing food.

Clarification was given that the lower parking area that is used by some visitors to Gnoll Park was additional disabled parking to the disabled parking in the car park at the Visitors Centre, Gnoll Park.

Discussion took place on the numbers of visitors to the Park and how these figures do not include dog walkers, or walkers who do not enter the visitors centre because the counter was at the entrance to the centre.

Discussion took place on the appointment of a consultant who would work with the Tourism Team to develop a plan to encourage visitors to the park and would encompass all areas of the park to increase income. In addition, promoting the area to a wide an audience as possible would also be included. Consultations would also take place with partners and the Gnoll Friendship Group.

It was queried whether the Consultant and the Tourism Team would be involving Members in their discussions. It was explained that Tourism falls under the remit of the Regeneration and Sustainable Development Cabinet Board/Scrutiny Committee (RSDSC) so they would have responsibilities to look at the Tourism element but that Gnoll Park falls under Education, Skills and Leisure Cabinet Board, Culture and Leisure Sub Committee (C&LSC). Members asked that a Joint Committee be arranged with the Culture & Leisure Sub Committee and (RSDSC) to consider the outcomes of the work of the Consultant and the Tourism Team.

Members noted the report and asked that when progress has been made a Joint Committee be arranged with the Culture & Leisure Sub Committee and (RSDSC) to consider proposals/outcomes.

4. **PRE-DECISION SCRUTINY**

The Committee chose to scrutinise the following Cabinet Board Items:

Draft Home to School Travel Policy 2020

Members received an overview of the public consultation exercise in respect of the proposed draft Home to School Travel Policy 2020. The 2020 policy updates and revises the existing Home to School Travel Policy 2017 as detailed in the circulated report.

Confirmation was given that the post 16 travel had not changed from the current position that no free transport was provided. Spare seats were offered if available, but this cost was being consulted upon to increase from £100 to £390 per annum.

It was explained that the family or financial circumstances were not part of the criteria for eligibility for free school transport. In addition, the cost of spare seats was not subject to any means testing process, if spare seats were available all pupils could access them at the proposed cost of £390 per annum, £130 per term, this would result in all spare seats having the same value, a proposed £390 per annum.

In response to Members queries the policy applies to the nearest Welsh language schools as it does to English speaking schools. If parental choice is for attendance at a Welsh school they would access free transport to the nearest Welsh school, if statutory school age and the distance criteria met, as long as it was the nearest Welsh school.

Members highlighted that some parents would prefer to enrol their child into a pre-school place that the child could continue to receive education in at school age. Officers explained that pre-school aged children were not eligible to access free school transport it was parental choice and it was not a statutory provision but they could access spare seats if they were available at the same cost as all children, pro rata if attending a half day, for example, Nursery.

It was explained that the numbers of buses/vehicles purchased for school transport are based on the numbers of children on admission and spare seats only come available if those seats are not allocated/used no additional seats are purchased for spare seats.

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

Play Sufficiency Assessment 2019

The Committee received an overview of the implementation of an action plan developed from the Neath Port Talbot (NPT) Play Sufficiency Assessment as detailed in the circulated report.

Members queried if there were any plans to develop a Play Association in Port Talbot. It was explained that this would be classed as a weakness and identified in the action plan as an area for improvement. The action plan is measured annually against the 3 year Play Sufficiency Assessment 2019 – 2022 to ensure that the aims are being met.

Clarification was given that the pilot scheme looking at lunchtime supervisors being trained as play workers was ensuring that the existing lunchtime supervisors could engage with the children they are currently supervising to make play more interesting. Eleven schools had registered for the training to date which would be evaluated a month after the training. Funding streams were available if necessary to fund training and the final model selected after evaluation has taken place. Members asked for a list of schools who have registered to participate in the scheme be circulated for information.

In response to Members queries the assessment does take into account parks that are owned by Town and Community Councils and they are invited to stakeholder events. In addition, all parks are ranked on how each park promotes play and are supported in developing further play activities.

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

5. **FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME 2018/19**

Members to consider what areas they would like to focus on over the next 12 months in readiness for the work programme meeting. Date of the Social Care, Health and Wellbeing Scrutiny Meeting (Work Programme) to be circulated.

CHAIRPERSON