



EDUCATION SKILLS AND CULTURE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

10.00 am THURSDAY, 6 JUNE 2019

COUNCIL CHAMBER - PORT TALBOT CIVIC CENTRE

PART 1

1. Declarations of Interest
2. Minutes of Previous Meeting (*Pages 3 - 18*)

To scrutinise information and monitoring issues being reported by:

3. Afan Forest Park - Car Parking Charges (*Pages 19 - 30*)
Report of the Head of Property and Regeneration
4. Gnoll Park (*Pages 31 - 36*)
Report of the Head of Streetcare
5. To select appropriate items from the Cabinet Board Agenda for pre-scrutiny (Cabinet Board reports enclosed for Scrutiny Members).
6. Forward Work Programme 2018/19 (*Pages 37 - 40*)
7. Urgent Items
Any urgent items (whether public or exempt) at the discretion of the Chairman pursuant to Section 100B (4) (b) of the Local Government Act 1972

S.Phillips
Chief Executive

Committee Membership:

Chairperson: Councillor S.H.Reynolds

Vice Chairperson: Councillor R.Mizen

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

***Co-opted
Voting Members** M.Caddick, A. Amor and L.Newman

***Co-opted Non
Voting Members** R.De Benedictis

Notes:

- (1) *If Committee Members or non-Committee Members wish to have relevant items put on the agenda for future meetings, then please notify the Chief Executive/Chair eight days before the meeting.*
- (2) *If non-Committee Members wish to attend for an item of interest, then prior notification needs to be given (by 12.00 noon on the day before the meeting). Non-Committee Members may speak but not vote, or move or second any motion.*
- (3) *For pre scrutiny arrangements, the Chair will normally recommend forthcoming executive items for discussion/challenge. It is also open to Committee Members to request items to be raised - though Members are asked to be selective here in regard to important issues.*
- (4) *The relevant Cabinet Board Members will also be invited to be present at the meeting for Scrutiny/ Consultation purposes.*
- (5) *Would the Scrutiny Committee Members please bring the Cabinet Board papers with them to the meeting.*

EDUCATION SKILLS AND CULTURE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

(Council Chamber - Port Talbot Civic Centre)

Members Present:

29 November 2018

Chairperson: Councillor A.L.Thomas

Vice Chairperson: Councillor M.Crowley

Councillors: S. ap Dafydd, M.Ellis, S.Harris, H.N.James, J.Jones, R.Mizen, J.D.Morgan, M.Protheroe, S.Renkes, A.J.Richards and D.Whitelock

Officers In Attendance A.Evans, C.Millis, A.Thomas, W.John, P.Walker, M.Wynne, W.Pedrick, S.Betsworth and J.Davies

Cabinet Invitees: Councillors A.Lockyer and P.A.Rees

Observers C.Galsworthy

1. **MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

The committee approved the minutes of the previous meeting.

2. **DISCUSSION ON THE OUTCOMES FROM THE CEFN COED COLLIERY MUSEUM TOUR**

The committee were informed of a recent site visit to Cefn Coed Colliery by members of the Leisure and Culture Scrutiny Sub Committee.

Members raised concerns that the public did not appear to be aware of Cefn Coed Colliery and what was on offer at the attraction, including mining heritage. Members stated that the colliery desperately needed to generate its own income. Members commented that in previous years schools used to visit the colliery which would contribute to its maintenance costs, but this had ceased. Members reported that a Cefn Coed Colliery Steering Group had now been set up, but assistance and expertise was required from the

Council. Officers agreed to work with the steering group to look at options to promote and market the colliery.

The committee requested for the item to be placed on the forward work programme for the Leisure and Culture Scrutiny Sub Committee meeting in January 2019.

3. **NPT MUSIC SERVICE – VERBAL UPDATE**

Officers updated the committee on developments in relation to the NPT Music Service. Officers informed members that £2 million would be made available to local authorities to underpin local services; however this money had not been received to date. Officers reported that a feasibility study was currently being carried out by Welsh Government (WG) on how to re-configure music services in Wales. Officers stated that the feasibility study would adopt the principles of the “Hitting the Right Note” policy. Officers emphasised the importance of Councils delivering the music services in Wales and not “arms length” companies. Officers explained that they would wait for the feasibility study to take its course, but would contribute to the study with a service model that suited Neath Port Talbot.

Officers raised concerns if the £2 million from WG was not released soon to local authorities, there was a risk that some services in Wales would be unsustainable, as had already been the case in Wrexham.

Members commented that a local delivery model appeared to work well. Members stated that a letter should be written from the committee to WG supporting the feasibility study, welcoming the short term release of funds to music services, and a request for a response on what further action would be taken by WG to sustain music services in the future. Officers stated that they would be willing to work with the Chair to draft a letter to WG. The Chair agreed to reflect the committee’s comments in a letter to WG with the assistance of officers.

4. **MARGAM COUNTY PARK BUSINESS PLAN PROGRESS REPORT**

The committee received a presentation from officers in relation to Margam Country Park Business Plan Progress Report.

Members queried whether the number of bookings for 2018/19 for weddings was actual or aspirational. Officers stated that the figures were actual bookings received, and many bookings had been received for 2019/20.

Members asked how much did the safari cost. Officers reported that the cost was £35.00 per person currently; however arrangements were being made to use a larger vehicle next year.

Members queried whether there were any plans to have a Christmas fayre at the park. Officers stated that this was being considered, but the infrastructure for the car park would need to be in place first to accommodate the potential increase in potential visitor numbers.

Members questioned whether officers were in the process of developing one style of branding for the entire park. Officers stated that this had been considered, but was not practical. Officer explained that the orangery had a different and distinct brand to the castle, and the Council had no control of the branding for Go Ape.

Members queried whether schools were being approached to hold their prom nights at the park. Officers stated that they were doing everything to promote Margam Park as a venue for prom nights to schools, and three schools had recently held their prom nights at the park.

The committee congratulated officers on the developments made in a short space of time, particularly as the park now received a reduced subsidy.

Following scrutiny, the committee noted the presentation.

5. **PRE-SCRUTINY**

The Committee chose to scrutinise the following items:

Cabinet Board Proposals

5.1 Performance Report Neath Port Talbot Libraries

The committee received information in relation to the Performance Report Neath Port Talbot Libraries as contained within the circulated report.

Officers informed the committee that the budget savings proposals put forward were at a very early stage, and that a further report including a wider range of criteria and elements would be brought back to a future meeting.

Members referred to the proposal to relocate Port Talbot Library, and queried how long was left on the lease of the unit in the Aberavon Shopping Centre. Officers stated that it was a 25 year lease which ran from 1998 to 2023. Officers added that £40,000 was currently paid in annual rent and there would be a saving by relocating the library. Members questioned whether a suitable alternative location had been found yet, and whether this would also be in a central location. Officers explained that they were currently liaising with the Estates Department regarding options.

Members commented that the data in the Library Strategy 2016-2021 was two years out of date, and questioned whether the most up to date information would be presented at the special budget meeting the following day. Officers explained that the most up to date information would be presented to the committee before any final decisions were taken.

Members referred to the lease of mobile library vehicles, and queried whether the information in the strategy was correct in stating that one lease had expired in December 2017, and another was due to expire in December 2018. Officers stated that the lease due to expire in December 2018 would be extended to February 2019, and would be reviewed next year. Members queried the cost of the annual lease. Officers confirmed that the cost was £10,000 a year.

Members referred to page 71, and commented that they hoped that the Council were still committed to “deliver a high quality service to their local community.”

Members referred to page 46, and commented that if Glynneath’s library was to close that the nearest alternative would be 11 miles away in Neath. Members added that some citizens would have difficulty accessing these services in this scenario.

Members referred to page 52, and asked officers to consider various data other than the number of books issued before determining

whether to close a library. Members added that the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act was a key.

Officers stated that they were currently looking at different models and ways of working to sustain libraries, and understood the value of libraries in the communities. Officers explained however, that the Council were under pressure to secure efficiencies as less money was now available than in previous years. Officers added that all the knowledge, data and facts would need to be collated before making any final decisions in order to understand the impact of any closures on communities.

Members queried whether the long term strategy was to discontinue the mobile library service. Officers stated that this was not the case; however the number of mobile vehicles would need to be reviewed, or possibly the Council would need to use smaller vehicles.

Members questioned whether the strategy aimed to diversify libraries and offer more to communities in partnership with other organisations. Officers concurred that one of the aims of the strategy was to work with third party organisations to share the costs of running the libraries.

Members referred to Cwmavon Library, and explained how it had become a community hub and not only a library. Members added that the community had raised £5,000 at the library for a Christmas tree for the community, and a trip to Bath had been arranged from the library also. Members queried why work had not been done in advance to understand the activities being undertaken in specific libraries before including them in the budget proposals. Members requested that before any library was proposed for closure that an extensive consultation be carried out, and work undertaken by officers to capture data on all services and activities offered by libraries to understand the impact of their closure. Officers made a commitment that consultations would take place before any final decisions were made. Officers re-iterated that the suggestions made for the budget savings were only proposals at this stage and that detailed work would be undertaken if it was decided to proceed with a particular proposal. Officers added that in this situation a report would be brought back to the committee with an opportunity to discuss the matter ahead of any final decision. Officers reminded members that their input and knowledge in this process would be gratefully received before officers decided which proposals to prioritise.

The Chair referred to an e-mail received from a committee member who was unable to attend the meeting. The member in question queried how the usage figures for Glynneath Library had been determined. Officers stated that annual attendance figures were recorded by staff. Members questioned if a library was closed how would citizens be able to access these services. Officers explained that WG guidance stated that citizens would be directed to the nearest library provided that it was within 2.5 miles; however where this was not possible a mobile library vehicle would need to provide this service instead.

Members questioned what was WG's view on NPT's library services. Officers made a commitment to bring back a detailed report at the next meeting on the performance of Council's library services for 2017/18 against the Welsh Public Library Standards via the Annual Assessment Report from WG.

Following scrutiny, the committee noted the report.

5.2 Local Authority Partnership Agreement Performance Review 2017-18

The committee received information in relation to the Local Authority Partnership Agreement Performance Review 2017-18 as contained within the circulated report.

Members queried whether there was a disability focus group in being. Officers stated that there was a disability officer for the district who would address any issues.

Following scrutiny, the committee noted the report.

5.3 Pontardawe Arts Centre Business Plan And Cinema Development

The committee received information in relation to the Pontardawe Arts Centre Business Plan And Cinema Development as contained within the circulated report.

The committee thanked officers for their hard work.

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

5.4 Expansion of the Childcare Offer in Neath Port Talbot

The committee received information in relation to the Expansion of the Childcare Offer in Neath Port Talbot as contained within the circulated report.

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

5.5 Quarterly Performance Management Data 2018-2019 – Quarter 2 Performance (1st April 2018– 30th September 2018)

The committee received information in relation to the Quarterly Performance Management Data 2018-2019 – Quarter 2 Performance (1st April 2018– 30th September 2018) as contained within the circulated report.

Following scrutiny, the committee noted the report.

6. **SCRUTINY FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME 2018/19**

The committee requested for a task and finish group to be established to look into the promotion of healthy life styles for school children. The Chair stated that three names had already been submitted, but political balance was required on the group.

The committee noted the work programme.

CHAIRPERSON

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EDUCATION SKILLS AND CULTURE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

(Council Chamber - Port Talbot Civic Centre)

Members Present:

11 April 2019

Chairperson: Councillor A.L.Thomas

Councillors: S. ap Dafydd, S.Harris, H.N.James, J.Jones, S.Miller, R.Mizen, J.D.Morgan, M.Protheroe, A.J.Richards and D.Whitelock

Co-opted Members: M. Caddick

Officers In Attendance C.Millis, A.Thomas, I.Guy, H.Lervy, A.Harris, A.Spooner-Cleverly, W.John, M.Daley, C.L.Davies and J.Woodman-Ralph

Cabinet Invitees: Councillors A.R.Lockyer and P.A.Rees

Observer: Councillor S.Reynolds

1. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

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

Councillor P.Rees Re: Report of the Head of Transformation on the Embedding The United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) within Neath Port Talbot Schools as he is Governor at Crynallt Primary and Cefn Saeson Comprehensive Schools and confirmed he has dispensation to speak and vote. He also has grandchildren in YGG Castell-Nedd.

Councillor A.Lockyer Re: Report of the Head of Transformation on the Embedding The United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) within Neath Port Talbot

Schools as he is Governor at Castell Nedd and Gnoll Primary Schools and confirmed he has dispensation to speak and vote. He also has a relative working in Dwr-y-Felin Comprehensive School and grandchildren in Alderman Davies Primary School.

Councillor
H.N.James

Re: Report of the Head of Transformation on the Embedding The United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) within Neath Port Talbot Schools as he is Governor at Ysgol Carreg Hir and confirmed he has dispensation to speak and vote.

Councillor
S.Reynolds

Re: Report of the Head of Transformation on the Embedding The United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) within Neath Port Talbot Schools as she is Governor of YGG Gwaun Cae Gurwen School.

Councillor
S.Reynolds

Re: Report of the Head of Transformation on the Library Service Review as she is a trustee of Canolfan Maerdy Resource Centre.

Councillor
S.Reynolds

Re: Report of the Head of Participation on the Think Families Partnership Update as she is a trustee of Canolfan Maerdy Resource Centre.

Councillor
S.ap Dafydd

Re: Report of the Head of Transformation on the Embedding The United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) within Neath Port Talbot Schools as he is a Governor at Ysgol Bae Baglan Comprehensive School and St.Joseph's School Sixth Form and confirmed he has dispensation to speak and vote.

M.Caddick
Co-opted Member

Re: Report of the Head of Transformation on the Embedding The United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) as she is Governor at St Joseph Comprehensive School and confirmed she has dispensation to speak and vote. She also has grandchildren in Neath Port Talbot Schools.

Councillor
J.D.Morgan

Re: Report of the Head of Transformation on the Embedding The United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) as he is Chair of Governors at Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Cwm-Nedd and confirmed he has dispensation to speak and vote.

Councillor
J.Jones

Re: Report of the Head of Transformation on the Embedding The United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) as she is Governor at Cymmer Afan and Abergwynfi Schools and confirmed she has dispensation to speak and vote.

Councillor S.Harris

Re: Report of the Head of Transformation on the Embedding The United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) as she is a School Governor and confirmed her dispensation to speak and vote.

Councillor
M.Protheroe

Re: Report of the Head of Transformation on the Embedding The United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) as he is Governor at Cefn Saeson Comprehensive School. He also has children who attend schools in Neath Port Talbot.

2. **MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

That the Minutes of the previous Education, Skills and Culture Scrutiny Committee held on the 28 February 2019, be approved.

3. **EMBEDDING THE UNITED NATIONS CONVENTION OF THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD (UNCRC) WITHIN NEATH PORT TALBOT SCHOOLS**

The Committee received an update on embedding the United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) across all schools through the implementation of the Unicef Rights Respecting Awards (RRA).

Discussion took place on the current approach taken by Neath Port Talbot Schools in regard to the Rights Respecting Awards (RRA). It ensures that the child's voice was heard and that they participated in planning for the positive outcomes they wished for. Members noted that RRA was not a statutory requirement, the emphasis of the awards was recognising the good work which had already taken place in Neath Port Talbot Schools.

The Committee was pleased that schools had been positively engaged and that there had been an increase in the number of schools participating in the RRA. Eighteen schools had achieved a bronze award and seven schools had received a silver award.

Members received confirmation that the £20,000 cost per year for 3 years would be funded from existing budgets within the Education Department. Following on, discussion took place on the benefits to schools of participating in the scheme of accessing free training and when required bespoke training being tailored to schools needs.

In response to Members queries it was explained that impact evaluation was carried out by Unicef UK and was recognised by local authorities across Wales with an increase in the numbers of schools implementing the scheme. It was noted that another impact which was not measured was the benefit to the child/young persons' confidence and wellbeing and the sense of empowerment that young people gained from the framework adopted by schools. Discussion also took place on how the framework was an important part of the new curriculum as part of the person centred approach.

Members asked that six monthly monitoring reports be included in the Committee Forward Work Programme and that they include examples of how the RRA was embedded in the day to day running of schools within Neath Port Talbot.

Following Scrutiny, the report was noted.

4. **PRE-SCRUTINY**

The committee scrutinised the following cabinet board items:

Cabinet Board Proposals

Library Service Review: A Sustainable Library Service 2020-2025

Members received an overview of the Library Service Review 2020-2025, as detailed in the circulated report.

Members were pleased that the outcome of the Library Service Review would be to develop a sustainable library service going forward.

In response to Members queries an update was given on how the consultation would be undertaken. It would include meetings in libraries with all interested parties, these would include Members, library users, groups and community trustees of libraries who have successfully transferred over. Also, prior to these meetings data was being collated on who users each library so that it can inform the consultation meetings. In addition, officers were attending public events to gain an understanding of why libraries were not being used.

Members identified the need to consider the effect on other community services that share buildings with libraries and how any changes would impact on communities.

Consideration would also be given, during the review to look at a variety of models of delivery for the library service that were used by other local authorities which would also inform the outcome of the review.

Officers confirmed that a report would be submitted to a future meeting of the Education, Skills and Culture Cabinet Board containing the outcomes from the review for Members' consideration.

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

Annual Pupil Performance Report 2017/18

Members received a summary of the performance of Neath Port Talbot schools and its pupils during 2017/18.

Members discussed the increase in the numbers of children in receipt of Free School Meals (FSM) and queried whether this increase was a contributory factor to the reduction in school attendance numbers. It was confirmed that it was a contributory factor as Neath Port Talbot was amongst the highest in Wales in terms of the FSM percentages but it was not the only factor. In addition, all children received the support they needed to assist them progress.

Concern was expressed at the lack of adequate initial teacher training received at Universities and the need to include in the syllabus information on how to recognise and deal with a variety of conditions that reflected in challenging behaviours in the classroom. Members felt that this should be raised with Welsh Government. Officers explained that the education department provided a comprehensive training programme for teachers in regard to Additional Learning Needs which was well received in schools. Training programmes were developed to include any new laws, changes and information. A report would be brought to a future meeting detailing the training provided and the effectiveness of that training.

Attention was drawn to the all wales statistical data and the figures contained within that data for all councils was very close and that the attendance difference was marginal. Officers referred to the excellent work that was being undertaken by the Education Welfare Officers in working with children who are persistently absent. It was emphasised that the figures for children who are persistently absent are very low. It was explained that unauthorised school holidays during term time was still an issue. The Committee asked that information on how the Educational Welfare Officers combat consistent absenteeism be included in the next Attendance Report.

Think Family Partnership Update

Officers explained that the Appendix attached to the circulated report was sent in error and would be considered as part of the Play Sufficiency Assessment 2019 – 2022 report scheduled for Members'

consideration at the next meeting of the Education, Skills and Culture Cabinet Board.

Members received an update on the progress made against the various elements of the Think Families Partnership, namely Families First, the Family Information Service, Flying Start, Children and Families Team and the Childcare Offer.

The Committee was informed that presently 113 providers had signed up to the Childcare Offer Wales and 700 applications had been received from working parents of three and four year olds. Applications were currently being actioned within 10 days and the scheme had received very positive feedback from parents and providers. Confirmation was also given that presently there were enough spaces to cover the demand. Welsh Government was looking at developing new settings to be able to increase the number of places. Analysis of postcode data had highlighted areas that had a lower take up of the offer and arrangements had been made to target those areas with an additional promotion to encourage take up

Members received confirmation that there were no plans by the Welsh Government to increase the funding to Flying Start. If new areas were to be added to the programme it would result in one of the current areas losing their provision.

Discussion took place on the variety of courses available to parents. The aim was to strengthen parenting capacity, develop and build resilience and sustain positive change in the best interests of children. It was also confirmed that all parents within the Flying Start areas were eligible to attend Parenting Classes and are either referred via an agency or self-referred. Officers explained that the effectiveness of the courses were constantly being monitored and a report would be brought to a future meeting of Education, Skills and Culture Scrutiny Committee on the impact of this initiative.

Following scrutiny, the report was noted.

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

Officers asked for clarification on the item School Improvement Literacy contained within the forward work programme for the 23 May 2019 to enable them to provide a report to Members.

CHAIRPERSON



Cyngor Castell-nedd Port Talbot
Neath Port Talbot Council

NEATH PORT TALBOT COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

Education, Skills and Culture Cabinet Board

6th June 2019

Report of the Head of Property and Regeneration – Simon Brennan

Matter for: Information

Wards Affected: Cymmer

AFAN FOREST PARK – INCREASED CAR PARKING CHARGES.

Purpose of Report

- 1 To update Members on the impact of the increase in car parking charges at Afan Forest Park

Executive Summary

- 2 To report on the impact the increase in car parking charges has had on existing businesses and in achieving a balanced budget for the Council at Afan Forest Park.

Background

- 3 Afan Forest Park(the facility) comprises the former Visitors Centre and Café (main building) ,car park, toilet/shower block and outside paths and grounds etc. as approximately shown edged in Black on the attached plan 1.

4. Prior to 1st April 2016 it was an operational facility run by Streetcare Services with a significant budget deficit. The Councils Saving Budget for 2015/16 cut the budget by £200,000 which resulting in the café being closed and no Council staff on site. Responsibility for the facility also transferred to Property and Regeneration.
5. As a consequence either the facility had to achieve an ongoing balanced budget or close.
6. As a result of a subsequent tender exercise the main building was leased to Cedar Tearoom Limited with the basement room leased to Afan Valley Bike Shed for which market rents are received. The adjoining Museum is leased out to South Wales Miners Museum a local charity for which a small ground rent is received.
7. However the Council retained responsibility for the day to day operation and running costs of the car park, toilet/shower block and outside grounds etc.
8. The income from the car park as approximately shown coloured Grey on at attached Plan 1, is fundamental to achieving a balanced budget at the facility.
9. Parking charges had been fixed at £1.00 for all day use for a number of years and there was no season permit system available.
10. It was also clear that many visitors were not purchasing a ticket due to the lack of on-site enforcement.
11. There was a budget deficit of £28245 and £12524 for financial years 2016/17 and 2017/18 respectively.

Parking Income during these periods were £5775 and £12381 respectively.

- 12 The Council has since installed 2 electric powered Pay and Display machines within the car park one of which accepts card/contactless payments
- 13 To meet the original FFP commitment to achieve a balanced budget to sustain the future of the facility back in February 2018 this Cabinet Board (and subsequently Streetscene and Engineering Cabinet Board) approved:
- i) an increase in Car Parking Charges to £1.00 for up to one hour, £2.50 for up to 4 hours and £3.50 all day, and the introduction of a season ticket at a cost of £52.
 - ii) for the car park to be included in the Off-Street Parking Order allowing effective enforcement on an ad-hoc basis by the Councils parking enforcement officers.
 - iii) These were to take effect from 1st April 2018 or the earliest possible date thereafter.
- 14 As part of these changes the three businesses in the main building were provided with up to a maximum of three free transferable season parking tickets for its staff.
- 15 Due to procedural matters associate with the legal parking order the increased parking charges were not implemented until mid-June 2018. Also the Councils parking enforcement officers have only recently started enforcement on an ad-hoc basis.
- 16 Despite this income from increased parking charges has contributed to a small budget surplus of £1534 for the financial year 2018/19.

Parking income for this period was £29128 an increase of £16604 on the financial year 2017/18.

Income from a full years increased parking charges and ad hoc enforcement by the Councils Parking Services should mean a larger budget surplus in this and coming years.

- 17 Other possible income generating and costs savings measures are being undertaken to include a review of expenditure at the facility and an audit of energy use for the outside toilet/shower block to reduce costs.
- 18 It is interesting to note that the number of recorded vehicles entering the car park between 1st January and 31st December 2018 was 35,161 whilst the number of parking tickets sold during that period was only 17,202.

This does not taken into consideration vehicular movement by the 45 season permits holders (to include the tenants and Council staff) however it does suggest that a large number of visitors are still not paying the parking charges.

Regular ad hoc enforcement by the Councils Parking Services will hopefully reduce the number of offenders this year resulting in increased income from parking charges.

- 19 The tenants were requested to provide their comments on perceived impact to their businesses of the changes to parking charges and responses are as follows:
 - i) Afan Valley Bike Shed
 - Verbally advised that they supported the revised changes and did not consider there had been any impact on their business.No formal representation was submitted.
 - ii) Cedars Tearoom Ltd
 - Accepted the need for the revised charges but considered there had been a negative impact on their business.

- They requested the Council extend the period of the £1.00 from one hour to one and a half hours. They consider this would attract more short term visitors for walking and to frequent the businesses at the facility.
- A copy of its formal representation is attached.

iii) South Wales Miners Museum

- Accepted the need for the revised charges but considered there had been a negative impact on their charitable business albeit that no evidence to support or formal representation was submitted.
- They have however formally requested additional free transferable season parking tickets for their volunteers in lieu of them undertaking without charge additional grounds maintenance works at the facility.
- Discussions are continuing to identify what works and whether could be undertaken safely by the volunteers and whether this would achieve a budget saving.

20. Recorded footfall within the main centre between 1st January and 31st December 2018 was 52,874 a fall of circa 8% for the same period in 2017 when it was 57,390.

However Cedars Tearoom Ltd inadvertently switched off power to the data recorder for a period of time last year which will have affected the recorded footfall within the main centre.

- 21 This recorded number of vehicles entering the car park which fell by 4% during the same period from 36,624 to 35,161. This clearly shows that a significant number of visitors to the facility for whatever reason do not go to the main centre where the businesses are located.
- 22 There has also been a general decline in numbers visiting

the Afan Valley in recent years and in particularly mountain bikers to Afan Forest Park. Since 2014 the number of recorded uses of the trails has decreased by circa 27,000 uses.

The reasons for the decline has been the subject of deliberation with stakeholders and Natural Resources Wales with the following identified as possible causes:

- A significant change in the way that mountain bikers seek to ride our trails, many now look for 'off piste' experiences. This trend could be affecting trail numbers as riders aren't being counted if they do not ride on formal trails.
- Diversions and closures of trails affected by active forestry operations (Afan is a working forest)
- A lack of strategic development and a future plan covering NRW/ NPTCBC and local businesses (similar to the former Afan Forest Park action plan).
- No specific marketing campaigns for Afan Forest Park since the completion of the European funded Cognation MTB Trails South Wales project in 2014/2015 which delivered approximately £5 million of investment in mountain biking infrastructure in South Wales.

- 23 Clearly there are a number of factors affecting visitor numbers particularly to the main centre other than the change in parking charges.
24. With such a small budget surplus the Council is not in a position at this time to fund the costs of implementation(circa £1250) nor the loss of income from extending the period of the £1.00 parking charges from one hour to one and a half hours.
- 25 However the request is worth considering if and when budget surplus considerably improve.Officers will therefore monitor the situation to see to implement if and when there is a significant improvement in the budget surplus.
- 26 In the meantime officers will continue to meet with the

businesses on a regular basis to discuss site management issues and opportunities to increase visitor numbers and further develop the facility as a popular tourist attraction.

27. The new Tourism Team is working with tourism stakeholders in Afan Forest Park and rebuilding partnerships with Natural Resources Wales in order to establish a strategic direction for the future development of Afan Forest Park.
28. The Tourism Team will also be delivering marketing campaigns with the aim of increasing footfall to key attractions and increase overnight stays within the county. The team has recently secured additional external funds to deliver a high profile marketing campaign which will include tourism providers from Afan Forest Park.

Financial Impact

29. The facility achieved a small budget surplus of £1534 for the financial year 2018/19.

30. Integrated Impact Assessment

There is no requirement to undertake an Integrated Impact Assessment as this report is for monitoring/information purposes.

Valley Communities Impacts

31. No implications.

Workforce Impact

32. No implications

Legal Impact

33. No implications

Risk Management

34 No implications

Consultation

35 There is no requirement for external consultation in this instance.

Appendices

36 Appendix 1 – Car Park Plan
Appendix 2 – Formal representations from Cedar's Tea Rooms

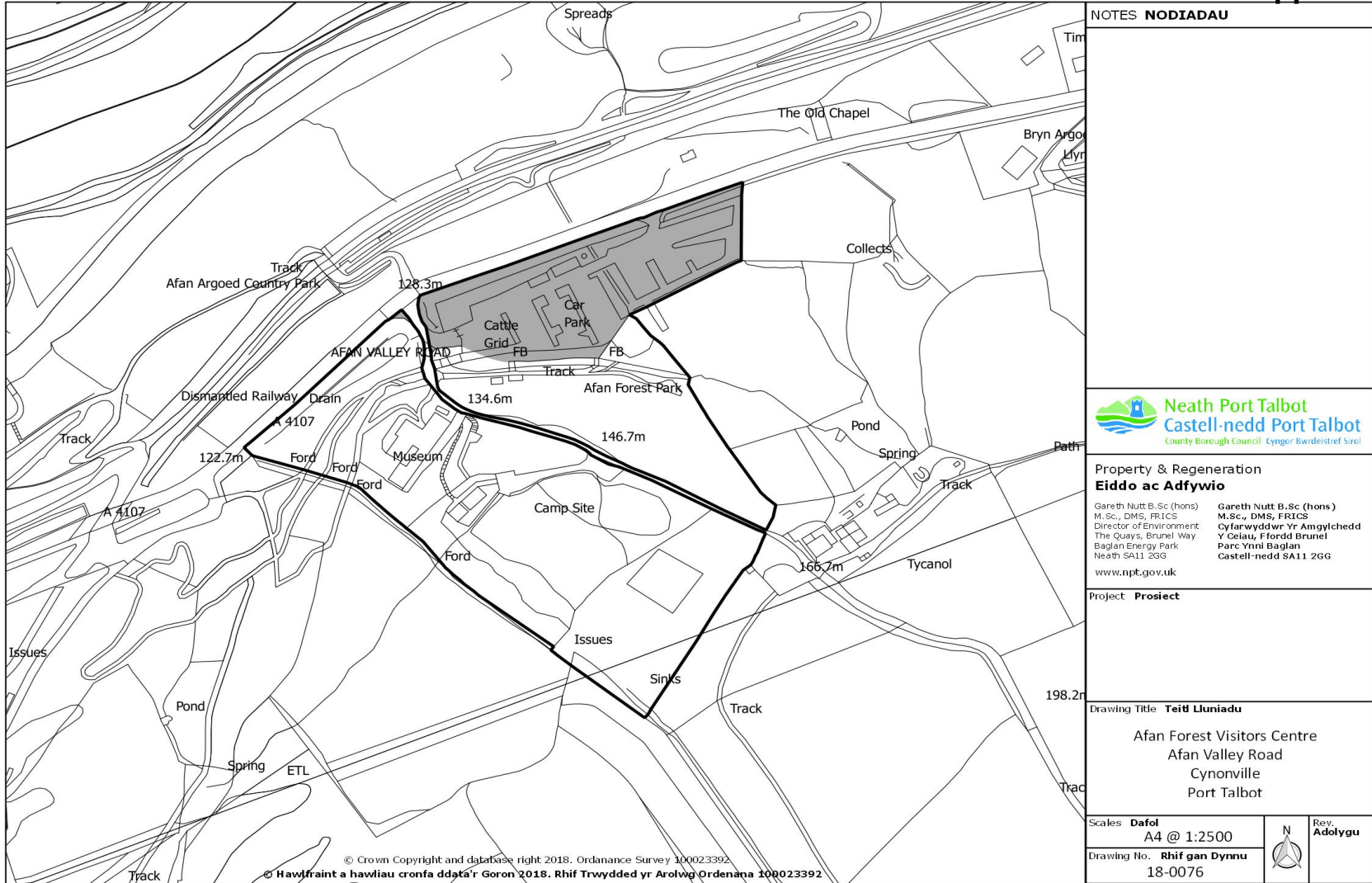
Background Papers

37 emails from the tenants in the main building

Officer Contact

38 For further information on this report item, please contact:
David Phillips, Strategic Property & Valuation Manager,
Tel: 01639 686980
E-mail: d.phillips@npt.gov.uk

Appendix 1



NOTES NODIADAU



Property & Regeneration Eiddo ac Adfywio
 Gareth Nutt B.Sc (hons) M.Sc., DMS, FRICS
 Director of Environment
 The Quays, Brunel Way
 Baglan Energy Park
 Neath SA11 2GG
 www.npt.gov.uk

Gareth Nutt B.Sc (hons) M.Sc., DMS, FRICS
 Cyfarwyddwr yr Amgylchedd
 Y Ceisau, Ffordd Brunel
 Parc Ynni Baglan
 Castell-nedd SA11 2GG

Project **Prosiect**

Drawing Title **Teitl Lluniadu**
 Afan Forest Visitors Centre
 Afan Valley Road
 Cynonville
 Port Talbot

Scales Dafol A4 @ 1:2500		Rev. Adolygu
Drawing No. Rhif gan Dynnu 18-0076		

Appendix 2

From: Cedars Tearoom [mailto:cedarstearoom@gmail.com]
Sent: 27 March 2019 10:34
To: Andrea S. Nicholas <a.nicholas@npt.gov.uk>; David A. Phillips <d.phillips@npt.gov.uk>
Subject: Re: Increased Parking Charges at Afan Forest Park

Dear Andrea/Dave,

We are so grateful, that you have sought and intend to assess our opinions in this matter.

We fully appreciate that in life very few things are “free” and parking your vehicle safely and conveniently for no cost, can no longer be a guarantee. Particularly when the expense and upkeep of such a facility is being met from the public purse.

We believe the attractions and facilities at Afan Forest Park are exceptional for the locality and a premium must therefore be levied.

As for our early findings, which we must add, cannot be solely attributed to the parking charge at this stage, we have certainly noticed both physically and financially, a downturn in footfall over these past winter months, the cause(s) may be many fold, ie. weather, desire, destination, cost of parking, far too many to ponderables and impossible to single out the root cause as of yet.

We can though state, as a matter of fact, that this customer downturn has sadly caused us to release some part time staff to allow us to trade on a leaner basis and get through this issue of some considerable concern.

We would wish to ask that NPTCBC deeply consider the effect of, and the fairness in its current banding of the level of charging, and hopefully offer the public a greater choice of incentively priced charges with possibly monthly, seasonal, annual and short term options available, anything to improve visitor numbers to this beautiful valley. We must ALL do our utmost to fulfill the potential that this site and the surrounding area, most clearly has to offer.

May I finally add our personal observations whilst driving through the valley and viewing our neighbouring Car Park at Rhyslyn near Pontrhydyfen, this is always extremely well frequented and very popular, far more so than at the visitor centre, dare I say the fact that this is “FREE” is bound to affect the choice of parking for those fortunate enough to be still so active, that stopping there, and then cycling or walking to our destination just over the bridge, can save them a considerable sum of money (over a period of time) in the process.

We must also pose the question, is this a fair scenario for our less able members of the community and population, whose patronage and input toward any business or venture, may affect.

We thank you for this platform and look forward to any further discussion you would care for us to participate in.

Kindest regards

Jill, Peter, Holly and Adrian of Cedars

Sent from my iPad

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Cyngor Castell-nedd Port Talbot
Neath Port Talbot Council

NEATH PORT TALBOT COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

Education, Skills and Culture Cabinet Board

6th June 2019

Report of the Head of Streetcare

Matter for: Information

Wards Affected: All Wards

Gnoll Park

Purpose of the Report:

To provide information as requested by Members.

Executive Summary:

Members will recall that the Forward Financial Plan in 2018/2019 included Gnoll Park making a further saving of £30k. Several recommendations were approved, and a further report was requested to measure the effects of these.

Background:

Members may recall that whilst a considerable reduction in the subsidy for running the park had already been made, the Council's Forward Financial Plan for 2018/2019, included a proposal to save a further £30K.

A report presented on 15th February 2018 identified several recommendations to increase income, aimed at improving the

sustainability of the park and assist in the preservation of the heritage features such as the dams, cascades and the Mackworth House ruins.

Members agreed to:-

- Car parking: Charges being increased to £2.50 for up to 4 hours, £3.50 for all day, and a season ticket for £52.
- Room Hire: Charges being increased to £66.00 for a full day and £33.00 for a half day.
- Footgolf: Charges being increased to £5.10 adult and £4.00 concession/junior.
- Café: Charges being increased generally by approximately 5%.

Since the 1st April 2019 rates have further increased in line with the corporate guidance for income included in the approved budget as follows:

- Car parking: Charges increased to £2.60 for up to 4 hours, £3.60 for all day, and a season ticket for £53.
- Room Hire: Charges increased to £68.00 for a full day and £34.00 for a half day.
- Footgolf: Charges increased to £6.00 adult and £5.00 concession/junior.
- Café: A further review has increased some prices based on popularity and market comparisons.
- The income from the fun fair has increased to £3,000 (see note below).

The fun fair has been selling food such as burgers, hot dogs and slush puppies when the sale of food was not permitted within their licence agreement. Action was taken to stop the fun fair from selling food given its potential detrimental effect on café sales and thereby income to the Council. However, the fun fair threatened to withdraw their fun day services and given the advertising that had already taken place an

agreement was reached for the remainder of the fun fair's licence agreement (which runs until September 2020) to sell food on fun days (up to 40 days per year) for an additional £1,000pa on their licence agreement.

Due to procedural matters associate with the legal parking order increased car parking charges for 2018/19 did not come into operation until Mid-June 2018

Visitor Centre Numbers

Visitor numbers recorded by an electronic counter on the entrance doors to the visitors centre are included in the table below.

2016	2017	2018
152,044	149,535	144627

It should be noted that many people visit the Country Park but do not enter the Visitors Centre and also, as detailed above, the impact on café sales by food sales on the part of the fun fair is not known. Increasing costs in the café could also be having an effect but for example:

Some comparative costs of a large milky coffee around Neath Port Talbot

Gnoll	Cedars (Afan Forest Park)	Costa	No.46, Neath	Gregs	Charlotte's Pantry Margam
£2.20	£2.70	£2.65	£2.70	£2.20	£2.20

Car Park Income

16/17	17/18	18/19
76,009	80,784	81,468

Café Income

16/17	17/18	18/19
166,635	173,542	172,436

Footgolf Income

16/17	17/18	18/19
1,389	2,725	1,145

Room Hire Income

16/17	17/18	18/19
1,789	4,039	3,696

Fun Days - Fair

16/17	17/18	18/19
2,000	2,000	2,000

Developments

A review of the Café facility has recently taken place. Matters such as stock control, food waste and staff allocation have been reviewed.

The Senior Ranger retired on the 31st March, this post is being replaced with the post of Managing Ranger.

The onsite previously tied cottage of the Senior Ranger is being considered as a holiday let.

A consultant is being commissioned in conjunction with the Tourism team, to develop a Master Plan for the Gnoll to review the overall development of the park.

Car park ticket machines have been replaced with two cash and contactless card payment units and a third is due to be installed. The associated software with these will also allow greater analysis of numbers, times of visits etc.

Issues

Parking on fun days: Improved parking management and potentially enhanced enforcement is required. Consideration also needs to be given to restricting parking at the lower pond access road to disabled parking only.

Fun fair franchise: Value for money and procurement approach needs to be considered in advance of current agreement expiring.

Facility development/management: need to revisit existing structure to ensure support is available to enhance commercial activity/income generation. Appointment of the Managing Ranger is part of such improvement.

Financial Impacts:

The table below identifies the annual expenditure (excluding any one-off costs for dam works etc.) for 14/15, 15/16, 16/17, 17/18 and 18/19 for the park.

2014/2015	2015/2016	2016/2017	2017/2018	2018/2019
£228,195	£179,110	£106,067	£93,585	£97,168

Integrated Impact Assessment:

There is no requirement to undertake an Integrated Impact Assessment as this report is for monitoring / information purposes.

Valleys Communities Impacts:

No implications.

Workforce Impacts:

No implications.

Legal Impacts:

No implications.

Risk Management Impacts:

If the Gnoll Country Park does not move towards a more cost neutral position then the sustainability of the park going forward will be called into question given the current climate of austerity.

Consultation:

There is no requirement for external consultation on this item.

Appendices:

None

List of Background Papers:

Gnoll Park Charges 2018/19 – Education, Skills and Culture Board
15th February 2018

Officer Contact:

Andrew Lewis, Waste and Neighbourhood Services Manager
Tel: 01639 686021 e-mail: a.lewis@npt.gov.uk

(DRAFT)
Education, Skills and Culture Cabinet Scrutiny Committee
Forward Work Programme 2018/19

Date of Meeting	Agenda Item	Officer
6 June 2019	Afan Forest Park monitoring report on the impact that the changes may have had on the existing businesses	
	Gnoll Park monitoring report on the effect and income from the decision to increase charges (including information on the Gnoll park business plan and any updates)	
4 July 2019	Report from Task and Finish Group on Promoting Healthy Living amongst NPT Pupils	Chair of T&F
12 Sept 2019		

24 October 2019		
12 December 2019		
23 January 2020		
5 March 2020		
23 April 2019		

23 May 2019		

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