

CABINET SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

(Council Chamber - Port Talbot Civic Centre)

Members Present:

10 July 2019

Chairperson: **Councillor M.Harvey**

Vice Chairperson: **Councillor S.Rahaman**

Councillors: S.E.Freeguard, N.T.Hunt, S.K.Hunt, S.A.Knoyle, A.Llewelyn, S.Miller, R.Mizen, J.D.Morgan, S.Paddison, L.M.Purcell, S.M.Penry, S.H.Reynolds and A.N.Woolcock

Officers In Attendance S.Phillips, A.Evans, H.Jenkins, G.Nutt, K.Jones, C.Griffiths, H.Jones, A.Thomas, N.Chapple, V.Dale, A.Hinder, C.Jones, N.Sparkes, N.Jones and T.Davies

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

1. **MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING**

That the Minutes of the previous meetings of Cabinet Scrutiny Committee, held on 29 May and 19 June, 2019, be approved, subject to the addition of Councillor J.D.Morgan's attendance on 29 May 2019.

2. **NEATH PORT TALBOT PUBLIC SERVICES BOARD ANNUAL REPORT 2018-2019**

In order to enable the Cabinet Scrutiny Committee to discharge the role given to it by Council, namely to scrutinise the work of the Public Services Board (PSB), the Neath Port Talbot Public Services Board Annual Report 2018/19 was presented to Members. Members noted that although they did not have the remit to change the Annual

Report, as it was the work of the Public Services Board, they were able to request the attendance of PSB partners if more in depth scrutiny was deemed necessary.

Members discussed the work of the Local Area Coordinators in connection to Wellbeing Objective 2 (Safe Resilient Communities) as well as their ability to empower communities to support themselves. Members also discussed the role of the Police in relation to this Objective.

It was noted that although such issues as 'a first class digital and transport infrastructure' were not currently priorities of the PSB, it would be appropriate for Members to ask PSB partners why certain areas such as these had not been identified as a current priority, even though they had been included in the Vision of the PSB.

The recent closures of well established, local employers, including the proposed closure of the Ford plant in Bridgend was discussed in reference to Wellbeing Objective 4 (Wellbeing in the Workplace). It was noted that a Welsh Government work stream had been established in response to the proposed closure of the Ford plant. Concerns around recent changes to local health boards and queries concerning their performance were also discussed.

Cabinet Scrutiny Committee Members requested that further scrutiny of Wellbeing Objectives 2 (Safe Resilient Communities) and 4 (Wellbeing in the Workplace) be added to the Forward Work Programme, and the relevant PSB partners be invited to attend.

Following scrutiny the report was noted.

3. **PRE DECISION SCRUTINY**

Committee scrutinised the following Cabinet items:

Removal of Council Tax Discounts for Empty Properties and Second Homes

Members discussed removing the level of discount in respect of dwellings that were classified as long term empty properties and those that were classed as second homes.

Council Tax exemptions were discussed, including the entitlement for council tax relief re empty homes where the owner resides in Residential Care. The appeals process and discretionary powers of Council Tax Officers were discussed, as well as the conversion of non-residential buildings into houses. Officers advised that an initial six month period of council tax exemption would still apply to empty properties before requesting full Council Tax payments.

Members queried why the circulated information had been presented by way of parishes rather than electoral divisions. Officers advised that the Council Tax Regulations required billing and reporting to be provided at Community/Parish levels and thus information was not available at electoral division level.

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

Corporate Plan Key Performance Indicators, 1 April 2018 – 31 March 2019 (Full Year)

The 2018/19 full year performance was reported to Members for the Council's Corporate Plan Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) for the period 1 April 2018 to 31 March 2019, for services within the purview of Cabinet.

Members discussed CP/015 (Percentage of schools that have adopted suitable programmes to address violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence (VAWDASV)), and specifically how this programme was being promoted in schools currently. Members noted that Officers would address the primary and secondary head teacher's forums in September with a view to further rolling out the programme to schools. Operation Encompass was also discussed, and Members noted this was an initiative which aimed to enhance communication between the Police and schools where a child was at risk from, or had witnessed, domestic abuse.

Members requested clarity on the term 'Channel Panel' referred to in CP/035. Officers explained this was a multi-agency meeting chaired by the Council, to identify individuals who may be at risk of being drawn into extremism or terrorism, before they became a threat to the community. There was a strong connection between the Channel Panel and other safeguarding agencies. The low number of referrals to the Channel Panel was attributed to a number of cases which did

not meet the threshold for the Panel but were signposted towards more appropriate pathways.

The following areas were also discussed:

- Calls abandoned/dropped calls
- New technologies and their impact on call queues
- Less resilience across all Council services due to budget pressures
- The need for different skill sets for call centre staff

Repeat offenders of anti-social behaviour were discussed in connection with CP/037, and Members felt this could be referred to the Community Safety and Public Protection Scrutiny Sub Committee for addition to their Forward Work Programme and further scrutiny.

Following scrutiny the report was noted.

4. **FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME 2019/20**

The Committee noted the Forward Work Programme for 2019/20.

CHAIRPERSON