

## **CABINET SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

**(Council Chamber - Port Talbot Civic Centre)**

**Members Present:**

**10 January 2020**

**Chairperson:** **Councillor S.Rahaman**

**Councillors:** S.apDafydd, 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, A.Jarrett, H.Jenkins, N.Pearce, C.Griffiths, H.Jones, A.Thomas, C.Furlow-Harris, S.Curran and T.Davies

**Cabinet Invitees:** Councillors C.Clement-Williams, D.Jones, L.Jones, E.V.Latham, P.A.Rees, P.D.Richards and A.Wingrave

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### **1. DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS**

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

Councillor S.Freeguard      Re Draft Budget for Consultation 2020/2021, as she is a member of the Mid and West Wales Fire and Rescue Authority.

Councillor S.Rahaman      Re Draft Strategic Equality Plan 2020-2024 – Draft Equalities Objectives, as he is a local authority representative and Secretary/Trustee of NPT BME Community Association.

Councillor A.N.Woolcock      Re Draft Budget for Consultation 2020/2021, as he is a member of the Mid and West Wales Fire and Rescue Authority.

## 2. **PRE-DECISION SCRUTINY**

The committee scrutinised the following cabinet items:

### Draft Budget for Consultation 2020/2021

Members considered the draft budget 2020/2021 prior to consultation.

Clarification was sought over why additional reserves from the Council's budget were not being used. Officers gave an overview of the current position with reserves (both general and specific), and explained that there was no certainty around how much money would be available from Welsh Government in future years, so it was responsible and prudent to keep reserves as long as possible.

The proposed 5% increase in Council tax was discussed, as well as the Council Tax reduction scheme, which was available to financially disadvantaged households across Wales. It was noted that £244 million was available across Wales - £16 million of which was allocated to Neath Port Talbot, with 17,000 people benefiting from the scheme.

Members acknowledged that the level of Council Tax was a significant burden to some people, but noted that for every 1% which was taken off the proposed increase in Council tax, an extra £700,000 had to be found from somewhere else to bridge the budget gap.

The following were discussed:

- Grants to leisure services
- Structure and period of the consultation
- Firefighters pensions and precepts

The Cabinet Member for Finance emphasised the importance of as many people as possible responding to the consultation, in the time available.

Following scrutiny, the committee was supportive of the proposals to be considered by cabinet.

## Draft Strategic Equality Plan 2020-2024

Members discussed the circulated report, including whether hate crime in sporting events was sufficiently covered. It was noted that this would be covered as part of the consultation.

Concern was expressed at the 'vagueness' of the reference within the valleys impact section of the report ("The draft equalities objectives, and the actions identified to deliver them, will be achieved against a backdrop of a reduced workforce alongside ongoing financial challenges"). Officers explained that a full Integrated Impact Assessment would be undertaken following the consultation, and attached to the next iteration of the Plan.

Members felt that the word 'continue/continuing' should be inserted where necessary within the draft Plan, in order to acknowledge that certain objectives had already been taken into account within the previous Plan.

It was noted that the draft Plan took into account what was possible within the resources the Council currently had available. The consultation process was discussed, and the methods used when reaching out for respondents.

Bullying was discussed – both towards pupils and teachers, as well as how the data was captured, and the reporting mechanisms.

Following scrutiny, the committee was supportive of the proposals to be considered by cabinet.

## Launch of the Citizens' Panel

Officers explained that the Citizen's Panel would not replace formal consultations undertaken by the Council. Questionnaires would be formulated by the communications team and sent out to a demographically representative group of local residents, approximately 12 times a year by an independent social research company.

Members noted this would be a quicker and more agile way of obtaining the public's views. The Panel's views could be sought on anything that covered the range of Council services. Officers were keen for young people to have a voice on the Panel, as well as staff who were residents.

Following scrutiny, the report was noted.

3. **FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME 2019/2020**

The committee noted the Forward Work Programme for 2019/2020.

**CHAIRPERSON**