



CABINET SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

2.00 PM WEDNESDAY, 30 SEPTEMBER 2020

VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS

All mobile telephones to be switched to silent for the duration of the meeting

Part 1

1. Declarations of Interests
2. Minutes of the Previous Meeting (*Pages 5 - 40*)
 - 29 January 2020
 - 5 February 2020
 - 12 February 2020
 - 19 February 2020
 - 5 March 2020
 - 21 May 2020
 - 25 June 2020
 - 23 July 2020
 - 30 July 2020
3. Pre-Decision Scrutiny
 - To select appropriate items from the Cabinet agenda for pre-decision scrutiny (cabinet reports enclosed for Scrutiny Members)
4. 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

Civic Centre
Port Talbot

Thursday, 24 September 2020

Committee Membership:

Chairperson: **Councillor M.Harvey**

Vice
Chairperson: **Councillor S.Rahaman**

Councillors: S.E.Freeguard, N.T.Hunt, S.K.Hunt, D.Keogh,
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

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.*

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CABINET SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

(Council Chamber - Port Talbot Civic Centre)

Members Present:

29 January 2020

Vice Chairperson: Councillor S.Rahaman

Councillors: N.T.Hunt, S.K.Hunt, S.A.Knoyle, R.Mizen, J.D.Morgan, S.M.Penry, S.H.Reynolds and A.N.Woolcock

Officers In Attendance H.Jenkins, S.Phillips, C.Griffiths, S.Morris, S.Curran, C.Furlow-Harris, H.Jones, K.Jones and S.Rees

Cabinet Invitees: Councillors C.Clement-Williams, D.Jones and A.R.Lockyer

1. **DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS**

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

Cllr S.M Penry: Re: Item 2 of the Cabinet papers re Consultation on Corporate Services Budget and Draft Savings Proposals, as she is a Board Member of CVS and Age Connect.

Cllr Saifur Rahaman: Re: Item 2 of the Cabinet papers re Consultation on Corporate Services Budget and Draft Savings Proposals, as he is secretary of NPT BME Community Association who receive grant funding from NPTCBC.

Cllr Sonia Reynolds: Re: Item 2 of the Cabinet papers re Consultation on Corporate Services Budget and Draft Savings Proposals, as she is a trustee of Canolfan Maerdy.

Cllr Arwyn Woolcock: Re: Item 2 of the Cabinet papers re Consultation on Corporate Services Budget and Draft Savings Proposals, as his niece is a Training and Development Support Manager in the HR division.

2. **CONSULTATION ON CORPORATE SERVICES BUDGET AND DRAFT SAVINGS 2020/21**

An overview was received on the Corporate Services Budget and Draft Savings 2020/2021, as detailed in the circulated report.

Policy and Democratic Services.

Members were reminded that the budget savings in the Policy and Democratic Services division had been agreed in the 2019/20 budget and no new proposals were included. The committee asked for a progress update and were pleased to note that officers were confident that the savings would be delivered and were in progress. There had been a slight delay in implementing the savings identified in CORP903 due to the problems experienced with the implementation of the online bus pass applications by Welsh Government and a revised plan will be reported back to Cabinet in early 2020. Members were pleased to note there had been no further surges in demand for bus pass renewal but stated their disappointment that incorrect information had been provided by Transport for Wales in relation to bus pass renewal and praised the Council staff for how they had dealt with the situation.

The committee noted that in relation to CORP905 market testing was currently ongoing to check demand and income assumptions in relation to CCTV and that the business case for a revised service would be brought to Cabinet later in the year. It was noted that there is a significant benefit to the criminal justice system from CCTV and that discussions were ongoing with South Wales Police in relation to their financial contribution to the service.

Legal Services.

The committee commented on the staff reductions in CORP 1001/1002/1003 in that the Council is having to do more with less people as resources continue to reduce. Members were concerned

that as the pressure on staff increases, rates of stress related sickness absence could rise.

Members asked if there was an option for income generation by hiring out the Council's legal expertise. It was explained that there are legal rules that we must comply with and which specify who we can do work for and also Law Society rules and limits and due to issues of conflict the ability to do so was limited.

Human Resources.

Members noted that in relation to CORP1007/1008 digital technology has led to reduced demand for transactional role requirements.

A discussion was held on the role of seconded Trade Union Officers. It was stated that there is a legal obligation to allow reasonable time off for Trade Union duties and with a workforce the size of the Council it is more practicable to have seconded officers. Members recognised the social partnership relationship with the Unions and agreed that the investment in these roles is valid.

Members queried the HR presence in schools and were assured that the service is provided in schools to the level required.

Finance.

Members queried the £190k saving identified in CORP1006 for staffing reductions and asked for further information. It was explained that this equated to 3 posts which had been vacant for 18 months together with a further 2 voluntary redundancies that will happen in 2020/21 and the decision had been made to remove the posts permanently from the staffing structure.

Central Savings.

Members were assured that the Capital Programme can be delivered effectively by removing the 500k as stated in OTH1001 with no impact to service or delivery.

Following consideration of the Integrated Impact Assessments included within the report, Members were reminded that their comments from this meeting would form part of the formal consultation response for the Budget 2020/21. They were asked that

if they had any other proposals for budget savings not included within the attached report that they approach officers for their consideration.

CHAIRPERSON

CABINET SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

(Council Chamber - Port Talbot Civic Centre)

Members Present:

5 February 2020

Chairperson: **Councillor S.Rahaman**

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

Officers In Attendance: S.Phillips, A.Evans, A.Jarrett, H.Jenkins,
K.Jones, C.Griffiths, D.Griffiths, S.Curran and
T.Davies

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

1. DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

The Chief Executive of Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council made a declaration of interest at the commencement of the meeting:

Steven Phillips	Re Future Arrangements in Respect of Neath Port Talbot Council Shareholding in Baglan Bay Company Limited and Coed Darcy Limited, as he is a Director of the companies concerned. As his interest was prejudicial he withdrew from the room during discussion and voting thereon.
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2. **PRE-DECISION SCRUTINY**

The committee scrutinised the following cabinet items:

Valleys Action Plan – Progress Report

Members discussed the lack of transport currently servicing valleys communities. It was noted that the City Deal Joint Committee had recently established a shadow Transport Sub Committee, with the agreement of the Welsh Government, to address priorities going forward. Although a lot of work was needed in this area, the building blocks were being put in place to improve the current situation.

The high occupancy of small business units in valleys communities was discussed, and Members noted the additional allocation made in the regeneration capital programme to be able to take advantage of potential funding opportunities.

Examples of social enterprises were discussed, including the domiciliary care service going forward. The service would be more geographical going forward, providing local jobs for local people. The difference between the new home help service (low level personal care) and the domiciliary care service (higher level and some medical care) was discussed.

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

Future Arrangements in Respect of Neath Port Talbot Council Shareholding in Baglan Bay Company Limited and Coed Darcy Limited.

In response to Member's questions, officers clarified that the price of the shares held by the Council in respect of Coed Darcy Limited was £1.

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

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

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

CHAIRPERSON

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CABINET SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

(Council Chamber - Port Talbot Civic Centre)

Members Present:

12 February 2020

Chairperson: Councillor A.N.Woolcock

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

Officers In Attendance: S.Phillips, A.Jarrett, H.Jenkins, N.Pearce, C.Griffiths, H.Jones, A.Thomas, S.Rees, S.Morris, Wellington, C.Davies and T.Davies

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

1. **PRE-DECISION SCRUTINY**

The committee scrutinised the following cabinet item:

Joint Response to the Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (Wales) Act 2015

Members discussed the scope of the Act in relation to services and support offered locally. Men were just as able to access these services and support as women, and many men had already been helped in the local area.

A recently noted trend, was domestic abuse from children towards their parents. Help would also be offered to older people who had been the subject of emotional or financial abuse from their partners.

Partnership work was key, and local hairdressers had been briefed on where to signpost possible victims of domestic abuse/violence, as clients may open up or share information more readily with their

hairdresser. This highlighted that different approaches were necessary to encourage different people to come forward.

Another operational example of partnership working was the Police sharing domestic violence reports information with schools. Pupils whose parents had been involved in domestic abuse over the weekend or school holidays could then be monitored and helped where necessary.

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

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

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

CHAIRPERSON

CABINET SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

(Council Chamber - Port Talbot Civic Centre)

Members Present:

19 February 2020

Chairperson: Councillor A.N.Woolcock

Councillors: S.apDafydd, S.E.Freeguard, S.K.Hunt, S.Miller, R.Mizen, J.D.Morgan, S.Paddison, L.M.Purcell, S.M.Penry and S.H.Reynolds

Officers In Attendance: A.Evans, K.Jones, C.Griffiths, A.Thomas, C.Furlow-Harris, S.Griffiths, C.Davies and T.Davies

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

1. DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

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

Councillor S.Reynolds Re Advertising and Sponsorship Policy (cabinet board papers), as she is the Authority's representative on various third sector organisations.

2. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

That the minutes of the previous meetings, held on 30 October, 20 November, 9 December 2019 and 10 January 2020, be approved.

3. **PRE-DECISION SCRUTINY**

The committee scrutinised the following cabinet items:

Establishing Mayor's Cadets

Members praised the commitment from the Council to young people, which would ultimately help them gain experience for the future.

Members noted that from May 2020, three Mayor's Cadets would be appointed for each civic year. These would be selected from local Army, Navy and Air Force Cadet Units. A piece of work would be conducted into widening the responsibility to include other cadets, such as the Police, Ambulance and Fire Service.

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

Advertising and Sponsorship Policy

The scope of the Policy was discussed, in line with corporate/ethical procurement, tendering and income generation. The existing arrangements regarding sponsorship of roundabouts was discussed, and whether these arrangements would continue or be brought in house at the end of the current contract.

Other topics of discussion included:

- Planning permission and highways consent
- Collaboration with third sector organisations
- Balancing advertising with respecting the environment.

Due to the recent cabinet member portfolio changes, members noted that the references to Deputy Leader contained within the Policy, as detailed at page 53 of the circulated cabinet board report, would be changed from 'Deputy Leader' to 'Cabinet Member for Finance'.

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

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

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

CHAIRPERSON

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Cabinet Scrutiny Committee

(Council Chamber - Port Talbot Civic Centre)

Members Present:

5 March 2020

Chairperson: Councillor M.Harvey

Vice Chairperson: Councillor S.Rahaman

Councillors: S.E.Freeguard, N.T.Hunt, S.K.Hunt, S.A.Knoyle, 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, H.Jenkins, N.Pearce, K.Jones, C.Griffiths, H.Jones, A.Thomas, D.Giles, C.Cole, C.Davies and T.Davies

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

1. **Declarations of Interests**

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

Councillor S.Freeguard Re Cabinet reports - Capital Strategy and Capital Programme 2020/21 to 2022/23 and Revenue Budget 2020/21, as she is a Member of Mid and West Wales Fire and Rescue Authority.

Councillor M.Harvey Re Cabinet reports - Capital Strategy and Capital Programme 2020/21 to 2022/23, Revenue Budget 2020/21 and Treasury Management Strategy, Annual Investment Strategy, and Minimum Revenue Provision Policy

2020/21, as he is an employee of South Wales Police.

Councillor A.Llewelyn Re Cabinet reports - Capital Strategy and Capital Programme 2020/21 to 2022/23 and Revenue Budget 2020/21, as he is a Member of Mid and West Wales Fire and Rescue Authority.

Councillor A.Woolcock Re Cabinet reports - Capital Strategy and Capital Programme 2020/21 to 2022/23 and Revenue Budget 2020/21, as he is a Member of Mid and West Wales Fire and Rescue Authority.

2. **Customer Services - Performance**

The Customer Services report was discussed, including queries around pest control. Members noted requests were seasonal – for example, wasps and rats queries were likely to increase as the weather warmed up.

The possibility of the responsibility for issuing bus passes being passed back to local authorities from Transport for Wales, was discussed. It was noted that a new database was now in place which should make the process smoother, but officers were supportive of the practise remaining with Transport for Wales.

Members noted that joint working with third sector partners was key to providing support to people who were not able to travel into urban centres to access services.

Following scrutiny, the report was noted.

3. **Pre-decision Scrutiny**

The committee scrutinised the following cabinet items:

Capital Strategy and Capital Programme 2020/21 to 2022/23

The possibility of extra capital investment from the Welsh Government, following the impact of the recent weather events was discussed. Over £1 million of work within Neath Port Talbot had been

identified as being needed immediately, with a further £3 million going forward. Officers were currently waiting for a funding decision from Welsh Government. National discussions were also ongoing.

It was noted that discussions were ongoing with Natural Resources Wales regarding the recent flooding and remedial measures. Extra funding from Welsh Government would not be part of the capital funding in next year's settlement.

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

Revenue Budget 2020/21

Members noted the proposed 3.79% rise in council tax, which had been reduced from the proposed 5%, following views from local residents during the budget consultation. Although the majority of members were in agreement with the proposal, some members indicated that they would be proposing amendments at Council, as they still felt the increase was too high.

Officers explained how important it was to have reserves in current times of financial uncertainty.

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

4. Forward Work Programme 2019/20

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

CHAIRPERSON

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Cabinet Scrutiny Committee

(Remotely via Teams)

Members Present:

21 May 2020

Chairperson: **Councillor M.Harvey**

Vice Chairperson: **Councillor S.Rahaman**

Councillors: S.apDafydd, S.E.Freeguard, 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 C.Morris, S.Phillips, A.Evans, A.Jarrett, H.Jenkins, N.Pearce, C.Griffiths, K.Jones, M.Shaw, J.Burge, C.Furlow-Harris, S.Blewett, A.Manchipp, S.Curran, T.Davies and C.Davies

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

1. Declarations of Interests

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

Councillor P.Richards	Re Capital/Revenue Outturn 2019-20(cabinet board papers), as his spouse Manages an After School provision at Blaenbaglan Primary School.
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2. Pre-decision Scrutiny

The committee scrutinised the following cabinet items:

Annual Governance Statement 2019-2020

Discussions took place around the focus for scrutiny committees to scrutinise specific collaborative and regional working arrangements detailed within the statement, however, members felt that this required broader consideration, such as, procurement and shared services in co-operation with the Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA).

Members were concerned at how the Council can effectively implement the improvement work that was planned for 2020-21 due to the recent impact of the Coronavirus pandemic. It was highlighted that the areas of improvement were an accurate assessment of where we were prior to the Covid-19 pandemic and the report detailed the priorities of improvement which would need further review during the recovery stage of the pandemic. Following this members asked that Cabinet consider amending the third recommendation detailed within the report, to consider an early and urgent review of the objectives within the corporate governance improvement work, due to the impact of Covid-19.

Following scrutiny, it was agreed that Cabinet be asked to consider the following recommendations

1. Members note the progress made on the corporate governance improvement work undertaken during 2019-2020
2. Approve the Annual Governance Statement 2019-2020 attached at Appendix 1.
3. Approve the proposed corporate governance improvement work to be undertaken during 2020-2021, subject to early and urgent review of the objectives, due to the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Capital/Revenue Outturn 2019-20

Members chose to discuss the Capital and Revenue Outturn reports as one item. The Director of Finance gave a brief overview of the reports. It was queried whether the budget would need to be reconsidered due to the effect that the outbreak of Covid-19 may have had on the budget. Members were advised that information relating to Covid-19 would be brought at a later date giving members an opportunity to scrutinise this element further.

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

Decarbonisation and Renewable Energy Strategy

Consideration was given to the responses received following a consultation on the draft Decarbonisation and Renewable Energy Strategy. Members commended the number of public responses that were provided to the consultation.

Clarity was provided on the launch of the Citizen's Panel and the request for a Citizens Assembly. Members noted that the Citizens Panel had launched in January 2020; 500 people had signed up to take part in the panel and a scoping exercise would be required to consider the best options on involving the public.

Discussions took place around the unexpected effects from the Covid-19 pandemic, such as the reduction in carbon emissions and improvements in air quality. Members encouraged Local Authorities and Governments to seriously consider the concept of a Green New Deal as part of economic recovery, by learning from this change and not simply taking return to a business as usual approach.

Reassurance was provided on the development of the narrative and branding that 'Heavenly' have been commissioned to undertake. Officers highlighted that there would be careful consideration around the translation of acronyms to Welsh to ensure that it is not just a direct translation but the meanings are the same.

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

CHAIRPERSON

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Cabinet Scrutiny Committee

(Via Microsoft Teams)

Members Present:

25 June 2020

Chairperson: Councillor M.Harvey

Vice Chairperson: Councillor S.Rahaman

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

Officers In Attendance S.Phillips, K.Jones, H.Jenkins, A.Evans, A.Jarrett, N.Pearce, C.Griffiths, H.Jones, C.Morris, M.Roberts, C.Furlow-Harris, D.Griffiths, C.Jones, S.Curran, A.Manchipp, C.Plowman, T.Davies and C.Davies

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

1. **Declarations of Interests**

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

Councillor M.Harvey	Re Healthy Relationships for Stronger Communities Strategy (Cabinet papers), as he is employed by the South Wales Police.
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2. **Pre-decision Scrutiny**

The committee scrutinised the following cabinet items:

Budget Update and Monitoring 2020 - 2021

The budget was discussed in line with the current impact of Covid-19 and the difficulties envisaged for setting a budget for 2021 – 2022.

Concerns were raised as to whether the Authority would comply with Audit Wales guidelines in relation to holding an adequate level of reserves as some authorities were contemplating issuing Section 114 notices. It was queried whether the Local Authority would increase reserves naturally over time or whether Welsh Government would replace the gap with additional funding. Officers explained to Members the financial position from March through to June, detailing the situation regarding claims which had already been reimbursed and claims that the Local Authority is still currently waiting for a response on. The Director of Finance and Corporate Services explained that within the report it is assumed that £2m will be reimbursed but hopefully the full £4.2m would be received. Meaning that the £10.8m deficit would reduce. Members were reassured that further updates would be provided throughout the year and this will continue to be monitored.

Members queried whether they would receive budget seminars to help set the budget. Officers explained that due to the current officer demand due to Covid-19 the seminars wouldn't likely be held before September/October 2020.

Members were reassured that the Council would pursue Arts Council funding to support the anticipated overspend on the Princess Royal Theatre and Pontardawe Arts Centre Theatre. There was also reassurance provided in relation to the underspend in Social Services department. This was due to the Social Services department being unable to recruit during the Covid-19 Pandemic.

Discussions took place around the expectation that services will resume as normal during the recent outbreak of Covid-19, however, the Committee were informed that this was not the case.

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

Healthy Relationships for Stronger Communities

Members welcomed the Healthy Relationships for Stronger Communities Strategy.

Discussions took place around the community cohesion aspect of the Strategy and the fact that this would promote community cohesion. Members queried this as it was felt that it would be difficult to promote community cohesion if without community cohesion to begin with. Members asked how this Strategy would link up with other strategies to ensure there is promotion of community cohesion. Officers welcomed the feedback and highlighted that the National Training Framework, is intended to raise awareness of domestic violence all across the community. It was noted that the National Training Framework actions in the Strategy would address these issues.

Members were informed that the Strategy was a Joint Strategy between the Health Board and the Local Authority. It was noted that the Health Board had provided minor amendments to the Strategy following the Strategy being brought before Cabinet. Therefore, it was asked that members consider an additional recommendation giving the Cabinet Member for Community Safety and Public Protection delegated authority to sign off minor amendments.

Following scrutiny, the Committee was supportive of the proposals to be considered by Cabinet, inclusive of the additional recommendation as detailed above.

Neath Port Talbot Local Development Plan (LDP) 2011 - 2026

The Chair highlighted that the Cabinet Scrutiny Committee Members had minor comments to raise in relation to the Draft Local Development Plan Review Report, however the main discussion would be dealt with in Council.

Discussions took place around the timescale of the review of the Local Development Plan. Members were reassured that whilst the formal commencement of the review had been formally delayed due to Covid-19, work on the evidence base was underway and Members would be encouraged to engage with the officers to support the process of the review. It was noted that the full review process would take 3 and a half years to complete.

The Chair of the Planning Committee highlighted to members that the review will address the issues around Houses of Multiple Occupancy.

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

CHAIRPERSON

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Cabinet Scrutiny Committee

(Remotely via Teams)

Members Present:

23 July 2020

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 and A.N.Woolcock

Officers In Attendance S.Phillips, K.Jones, H.Jenkins, C.Griffiths, H.Jones, I.Vaugh, D.Hopkins, N.Thomas, A.Harding, S.Curran, T.Davies, A.Manchipp, C.Plowman and C.Davies

Cabinet Invitees: Councillors P.A.Rees

The Committee held a minute's silence in respect for the recent passing of Councillor Steffan Ap Dafydd.

1. **Recovery Strategy**

Members were presented with a draft strategy on stabilisation, the period between response and recovery, following the COVID 19 outbreak. The strategy set out a general framework that would support a consistent and co-ordinated approach as the Council moved towards recovery. It was noted that the draft strategy was being presented to all Scrutiny Committees for comments before presentation to Cabinet on 30th July 2020 for approval.

Officers gave a brief overview of the content of the strategy, explaining that it was split into three sections which consisted of looking back at what the Council did during the response phase of the crisis, looking forward as the UK moved out of the response phase and a road map of actions.

It was noted that the third part of the strategy was presented as a road map of actions which was framed on the basis of a traffic light system, which set out how to move from a position of total lockdown, through the traffic light system, to a position where services are back up and running.

It was highlighted that the main reason for this report was to provide a context for where the directorates are currently and what they had been doing during the pandemic which were detailed in the presentations from the directorates.

There was concern raised around the overlap between the membership of the cabinet scrutiny arrangements and the membership of the Recovery Panel. Officers undertook to explore this in more detail and to provide advice as might be necessary.

The Director of Finance and Corporate Services gave an update on the financials following the recent outbreak of Covid-19. It was noted that a further budget report would be brought to Cabinet in September detailing the projected financials for the rest of 2020-2021 and clarity on further funding opportunities.

Discussions took place on ensuring correct communication was taking place with the public. It was noted that public involvement was imperative and therefore the main points within report relating to communication would be made clear before being put before Cabinet in July.

It was noted that Cabinet Scrutiny Committee may wish to include the Public Services Board in their Forward Work Programme, to scrutinise further and view the impacts Covid-19 has had on areas such as economic and equalities.

Members looked forward to being kept updated with the monitoring of the strategy in future sessions.

2. **Finance and Corporate Services Current Service Delivery and Recovery Plans**

The Director of Finance and Corporate Services gave a brief overview of the work undertaken by the directorate during the Covid-19 Pandemic.

Members are regularly updated in scrutiny committees on the annual budget cycle. They were provided with information on the impact and service demand in the following services due to the recent Covid-19 Pandemic.

- Legal Services
- Human Resources and
- Finance Services.

Legal Services were commended for continually keeping up to date with legislation changes during these unprecedented times, to ensure the Council is working efficiently.

It was noted that the Council had continued to pay all staff during this pandemic and provided relief to businesses with their business rates.

The Chair of Planning and Licensing Committees commended staff for their standard of work and providing support in enabling the committee's to run as usual remotely.

The Committee noted the update.

3. **Policy, Democratic and Digital Services- Current Service Delivery and Recovery Plans (to follow)**

Members received a presentation on the current service delivery and recovery plans for the Policy, Democratic and Digital Services which was circulated before the meeting.

It was noted that services such as the Communications Team had to increase their working week hours and days to keep up with demand.

It was highlighted that the Covid-19 Pandemic had provided services with lots of innovations to move forward with such as, the Communications Team had posting videos online, provided physical signage in the County Borough and kept in contact with the public through telephone calls as well as their usual press releases.

The Digital Service Department also had high demand in ensuring the workforce could work remotely from home. They provided online services to meet demand such as the by local website, the Chat Bot, Chat Live and Council tax assistance online.

Members were updated on the work the Democratic Services Department had achieved in ensuring Committees could be held remotely. They continually updated members with regular advice and guidance changes through their welfare calls, urgency actions and Q and A website. Praise was provided for enabling remote meetings to proceed when legislation was amended, it was noted that Neath Port Talbot were the first Authority to run a remote Council meeting.

The collaborative working amongst different departments was emphasised and encouraged for the future.

It was noted that due to the impact of Covid-19 on the workforce the Welsh language duties were relaxed, however, officers are working to resume bilingual services in the near future.

Discussions took place in how prioritise will differ moving forward due to the effect of Covid-19. It was noted that it is within the scrutiny committee's gift to prioritise what they feel is important to consider in their Forward Work Programme such as the Public Services Board.

Members were pleased to note the updates from the Directorates and agreed that a Forward Work Programme session would be arranged for the autumn to focus on the main topics that have been raised in the presentations to help with the recovery phase.

CHAIRPERSON

Cabinet Scrutiny Committee

(Remotely via Teams)

Members Present:

30 July 2020

Chairperson: Councillor M.Harvey

Vice Chairperson: Councillor S.Rahaman

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

Officers In Attendance: A.Evans, A.Jarrett, H.Jenkins, K.Jones, S.Phillips, C.Davies, C.Griffiths, C.Furlow-Harris, T.Davies, S.Curran, R.Headon, A.James, C.Plowman, D.Griffiths and S.Blewett

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

Observers: H.Neary

1. **Declarations of Interests**

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

Councillor S.Reynolds Re NPT Safe and Well – Humanitarian Assistance Provided by the Council in response to the Covid-19 Pandemic (Cabinet papers), as she is the voluntary acting manager and trustee of Canolfan Maerdy

2. **Pre-decision Scrutiny**

The committee scrutinised the following cabinet items:

Welsh Language Standards Annual Report 2019-2020

The Committee welcomed the Welsh Language Standards Annual Report for 2019-2020.

Members were pleased to learn, from looking at the stats, that the number of staff who signed up for Welsh learning had increased.

It was asked whether the effects of COVID 19, in particular the redeployment of staff, would have an overall impact on the work that the Welsh Language Officer Group had planned for next year.

Officers confirmed that the pandemic did have an effect on the work of the Group; meetings of the Group were cancelled and some of the Officers involved were redeployed. However, it was noted that some Officers had started to return to their substantive posts and plans were in place for a meeting in September in which the Group would be discussing the outcomes from the review of the mystery shopper exercise, the evaluations of the training that accountable managers received in March 2020 and the re-prioritised programme of work for the rest of the year.

Detailed in the circulated report it stated that the outbreak of COVID 19, meant that considerable changes were made to the way in which the council operated and due to the limited internal linguistic skills, the council's ability to provide communications in Welsh and English was impacted for a period of time. It was highlighted that progress had since been made and the council were now simultaneously publishing English and Welsh versions of press releases and had resumed English and Welsh social media accounts; when a post would be shared from a third party, which was only available in English, staff would be adding appropriate comments in Welsh on the Welsh social media accounts. Officers also mentioned that the NPT Buy Local Welcome Back to Pontardawe video included both English and Welsh shop owners and provided subtitles for both languages. It was also confirmed that the Welsh language accounts were being monitored for messages and where a response was required, it would be provided in Welsh. Members were informed that the next key piece of work would be looking at the COVID 19 pages on the council's website, in which an audit had already started to remove information that was not relevant; following this translation of the information that needs to remain on the website would begin.

Following scrutiny, the report was noted.

NPT Safe and Well – Humanitarian Assistance Provided by the Council in response to the Covid-19 Pandemic

A discussion took place in relation to those who were eligible for support from the Safe and Well Service, following Members concern that the eligibility list did not include mental health patients, in particular the patents who did not receive a shielding letter from the NHS. It was noted that as individuals were being transitioned who currently received support from the Safe and Well Service and whom staff had concerns, social services were involved to ensure appropriate support was in place. Members were asked to refer any individuals they were concerned about, to their community leads. Officers added that in the autumn, and the prospect of there being a need for further support to be provided, staff would be looking at their contingency planning; therefore, if Members thought that groups of people had been missed off the criteria, Officers would be happy to take their feedback on board and fit it into the contingency planning.

Members asked if Officers could expand on matter of recruiting a volunteer coordinator. It was stated that the volunteer coordinator is not intend to replace the community leads, instead the volunteer coordinator will relieve the youth service manager from the support that he had been providing to the volunteers recruited over recent months. Members were informed that there were 200 active volunteers working within the service and there was a need for someone to continue the role of volunteer coordinator in October when the youth service manager returned to their normal duties as the role would ensure that the volunteers still received support. Officers highlighted that between now and October, they would be looking to develop proposals on the ongoing role of volunteers within the Council and that Members would receive these proposals in due course for consideration. In relation to the community leads, it was mentioned that some had returned to their substantive posts, but staff had been trying to maintain the cover in the communities while the transition was taking place. It was confirmed that Officers would be spending time to discuss the options around the replacement of the community leads and would be putting a plan in place in which Members would be consulted on, as Officers had taken on board the feedback that was obtained from the Member survey in relation to the welcoming of coordination at community level. It was added that the Member Panel Coronavirus Recovery Phase had set up a workshop in September with the hopes to establish clear recommendations.

The reported highlighted that the food delivery service that was being paused on 16 August 2020, to which Members asked if it would be resumed and was the Council planning for this to happen. It was confirmed that the Chief Medical Officer had stated that the infection rates at the moment were low enough to give him confidence that some of the restrictions, that shielding individuals had been asked to comply with, could be eased in August; however, in certain areas in England there had been rises in infection which meant that certain individuals who were previously shielding were asked to reintroduce some of the restrictions. It was mentioned that Welsh Government had used the word 'paused' instead of 'stop' as we were still in the middle of the pandemic and infection rates could potentially rise again. In terms of the food service, it was noted that the Government had no current plans to re-introduce the free national food delivery service, therefore there was a need for the Council to make concrete local plans to support people who may be asked to put themselves under further restrictions, if there was a small or large outbreak going into the autumn. Officers confirmed that they had already started considering this and had hopes to have contingency plans of different scenarios in place at the end of August; it was added that local shops were now in a different position, since the beginning of the pandemic in March, to provide support.

Members referred to Appendix 4, the lessons learned table, contained within the circulated report and asked whether the removal of the command and control approach was going to be actioned, as the removal of this, due to the pandemic, had empowered staff and encouraged more creative thinking. It was noted that Officers would be providing a more detailed action plan against all of the elements contained within the lessons learned table and that they were still obtaining feedback which would be built into the forward planning for the autumn. It was added that the elements fell into two broad categories:

1. Actions that would need to be completed immediately due to the need to inform plans for the autumn and the prospect that there could be a rise in infections.
2. Longer term changes to take forward, in particular how the culture of the Council would be developed

Officers were asked if a decision had been made, based on the lessons learned, in relation to how the Local Area Coordinators (LACS) were going to be deployed. It was highlighted that feedback

had been received from most Members that having the coordination at the local area level had been really important; there had been brief discussions on the role of the LACS in the Member Panel Coronavirus Recovery Phase and Officers had met to identify what the proposals may look like going forward. Officers added that further discussion was planned in the Member Panel and the Member Workshop, to look at the role of the LACS and where the wider Councils effort would be around community development, taking into consideration the feedback from lessons learned from the Safe and Well Service and what Members had expressed.

Compliments were given to the area coordinators for their hard work, the effectiveness of the Safe and Well Service, the work of RADAR and how well Age Cymru West Glamorgan and Age Connect worked together prior to the Safe and Well Service being set up and during that time.

The Committee briefly discussed the phone calls that were carried out to those who were shielding and had not made contact through the Safe and Well Service, to which it was noted that the majority of the individuals who were contacted confirmed they had support in place which meant there was only a small number of individuals who were referred as a result of the phone calls. Officers highlighted that it was evident how welcomed the calls were and staff had mentioned that it took a long time to work through the call list due to the length of time that they were on the phone; this was something that would need to be considered, potentially how communities would be able to support people in this position.

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

Recovery Strategy

Members expressed their appreciation to the work that went into preparing the Recovery Strategy and the hard work, commitment and flexibility of the Councils workforce.

Future working was discussed, in particular the need to achieve balance between remote working and attending council offices, being mindful of economic and environmental factors, the importance of communities and value of local government. Officers stated that in terms of process, the Member Panel was established to provide this type of advice to Cabinet, as the Council worked out the longer term recovery plans and the Panel could be used to start ways of thinking

in relation to the broader discussions. It was noted that the circulated report captured the stabilisation period, where Council services were being re-started and ensuring that the Test, Trace and Protect arrangements locally and regional were fit for purpose. Members were informed that the report provides a picture of what had happened so far and the current position of the Council and that further recovery planning will need to take place moving forward.

It was noted that there was not enough emphasis within the report on the work of the community champions, originations, community councils and other partners and that going forward these groups will be crucial. Officers stated that the report didn't seek to evaluate the community response as this was a piece of work that the Member Panel had agreed to undertake; an external researcher had been commissioned to learn from the community and how they felt the response had been mobilised. It was highlighted that the Council was interested to understand how this could be encourage to continue.

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

CHAIRPERSON