

Cabinet Scrutiny Committee

(Via Microsoft Teams)

Members Present:

25 November 2020

Chairperson: **Councillor M.Harvey**

Vice Chairperson: **Councillor S.Rahaman**

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

Officers In Attendance S.Phillips, H.Jenkins, A.Evans, A.Jarrett, K.Jones, C.Griffiths, S.Brennan, M.Roberts, D.Griffiths, A.Thomas, R.George, J.Smith, P.Walker, J.Hillier, C.Plowman, J.Woodman-Ralph 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, P.D.Richards and A.Wingrave

1. Pre-decision Scrutiny

The Committee scrutinised the following cabinet items:

Gnoll Estate Country Park Masterplan

Members were provided with a summary of the Gnoll Estate Country Park Masterplan and the opportunities that the plan presents for enhancing the park.

The Chair of the Regeneration and Sustainable Development Scrutiny Committee commended the report on behalf of himself and the Regeneration and Sustainable Development Scrutiny Committee. The Chair asked officers to consider broadening the audience on the consultation to receive an extensive response in future.

Discussions took place in relation to the lack of parking available at the location and the potential for additional parking following the masterplan. Parking costs for local residents were discussed, officers highlighted that all parking costs were in line with the town centre parking.

Member asked whether certain events that the Council had previously held at the Gnoll Park would require relocation. Officers explained that there were discussions taking place to ensure events of the Council can take place.

Members highlighted that the Visitor Experience Action Plan did not include actions around enhancing biodiversity at Gnoll Estate Country Park which was noted as a key priority for respondents of the online survey. It was noted that the Officer Working Group would ensure that biodiversity actions would be taken forward within the action and plan and asked how this would be promoted and monitored. It was explained that the officer working group was still premature and the scrutiny arrangements would continue within the Leisure and Culture Scrutiny Committee enabling an opportunity to continue scrutinise and monitor this further.

Members asked officers to consider the wildlife at the park to ensure it continues to be a country park and preventing a reduction of wildlife.

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

Neath Business Improvement District Re Ballot

Members were informed of the intention of Neath Inspired (BID) to take a renewal ballot for another five year term within the Neath Town Centre area.

Members relayed concerns in relation to the levy that businesses would be required to pay, if they were in the BID zone. In addition, concerns were raised over the ongoing difficulties businesses face due to the loss of income caused by the coronavirus pandemic.

Officers assured members that they understood their current reservations but, on balance, felt that the BID renewal could support local business recovery from the pandemic over the next five years. . With regard to the levy payment Members were advised that

such a payment would only be payable by businesses with an aggregated rateable value of £6K or more. All businesses rated below this threshold would be exempt.

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

IT Equipment for Schools

Members were updated on the Council processing and providing IT equipment for children in all schools.

Members noted and commended the work that had been involved in ensuring Blended Learning could succeed and the importance of attaining the equipment. It was asked whether training and software packages had been considered in line with the distribution of the IT equipment. Officers confirmed that training and software packages had been considered. It was highlighted that pupils would be accessing different platforms to achieve blended learning and schools were providing training on usage of the software and equipment.

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

2. Access to Meetings

RESOLVED: that pursuant to Section 100A(4) and (5) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded for the following items of business which involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 14 of Part 4 of Schedule 12A to the above Act.

3. Pre-Decision Scrutiny of Private Item/s

The Committee scrutinised the following private Cabinet item:

Leisure Financial Arrangements

Members were presented with a private report providing an update on the current financial arrangements within the Leisure facilities and the effects that Covid-19 has had on these facilities.

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

CHAIRPERSON