

**Joint Meeting of the Cabinet / Education Skills and Culture /  
Regeneration and Sustainable Development Scrutiny Committees**

**(Via Microsoft Teams)**

**Members Present:**

**2 June 2021**

**Chairperson: Councillor S.K.Hunt**

**Vice Chairperson: Councillor S.Rahaman**

**Councillors:** S.Bamsey, J.Evans, S.E.Freeguard, S.Harris, N.T.Hunt, S.K.Hunt, H.N.James, C.J.Jones, J.Jones, S.A.Knoyle, A.Llewelyn, S.Miller, R.Mizen, S.Paddison, S.M.Penry, L.M.Purcell, S.Pursey, S.Rahaman, S.Renkes, S.H.Reynolds, M.Spooner, R.L.Taylor, R.W.Wood and A.N.Woolcock

**Officers In Attendance:** S.Brennan, S.Curran, C.Griffiths, A.Jarrett, H.Jenkins, W.John, H.Jones, K.Jones, M.Shaw, A.Thomas, P.Walker and J.Woodman-Ralph

**Cabinet Invitees:** Councillors C.Clement-Williams, M.Harvey, D.Jones, L.Jones, E.V.Latham, A.R.Lockyer, S.Lynch, P.A.Rees and P.D.Richards

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**1. Appointment of Chairperson and Vice Chairperson**

It was agreed that Councillor S.Hunt be appointed Chairperson and that Councillor S.Rahaman be appointed Vice Chairperson for this joint meeting.

**2. Declarations of Interests**

The following members made a declaration of interest at the start of the meeting:

Councillor Sian Harris

Re: Cefn Coed Museum Update as she was a member of the previous steering group for Cefn

Coed Colliery Museum which was set up by NPTCBC and is currently a member of the Friends of Cefn Coed Colliery

Councillor Steve Hunt

Re: Cefn Coed Museum Update as he was a member of the previous steering group for Cefn Coed Colliery Museum which was set up by NPTCBC

3. **Cefn Coed Museum Update (enclosed within Cabinet Papers)**

The Committee was provided with an update on the proposed scheme of works and the emerging health and safety issues at the Cefn Coed museum site; the report also provided information on the Cefn Coed Working Group that was going to be set up to help shape future plans for the site.

Members were informed that a grant application was made to Welsh Government for around £1.8 million, which had been approved; the Council was then obliged to put in the remainder of the money required to put a scheme together (£800,400 as detailed in the circulated report).

It was stated that the original scheme that was created sought to deliver on a number of elements including a new visitor centre, external works and an outdoor play area. An initial due diligence was undertaken on the site which raised a number of key questions and necessitated a more detailed due diligence exercise; this included further investigation on a number of issues, including consultation with CADW, and as a result of this work, it became clear that it was not possible to process with the original scheme and an alternative proposal was therefore put forward. It was highlighted that the revised scheme was unable to be progressed due to the time elements involved; it would have taken around 18 months to develop, however the Council had to spend the money within 4-5 months (by March 2021). As a result of this, it was agreed with Welsh Government that the Council would complete survey work instead, in order to understand the issues on the site and to ensure that the Council was in a good position to bid for money, should another round of grant funding become available.

Officers confirmed that the survey work had been completed and it highlighted a number of issues; one of which was the existing health and safety concerns for the site. It was mentioned that it would cost the Council over £1 million to deal with the health and safety concerns. In relation to the works that Officers were proposing as part of the revised scheme, it was noted that the initial suggestions were that this would come in excess of £8 million.

The local Member for Crynant, who was in attendance at the meeting, shared concerns in regards to elements of the circulated report and reiterated the value of the site for the local community and beyond. The local Member also shared information on the history of the site and personal thoughts and experiences including those of which had been highlighted by visitors of the museum.

The circulated report stated that the Council leased around 1.6 acres of land and buildings, comprising Cefn Coed Colliery Museum, from Welsh Government which was due to expire in 2077; under the terms of the lease, the Council was responsible for all repair and maintenance issues. Members raised a number of queries in relation to the repair work that needed to be undertaken at the museum site; it was asked if any issues had been raised when the museum was open, and if so why hadn't these issues been addressed. Officers explained that the site was one of many old and complex sites that the Council owned and that there wasn't enough money within the budgets to address all issues in all buildings; some of the more concerning issues were monitored over the years. In relation to the scheme, it was noted that some of the issues that needed to be looked into were outside of the Councils current lease. In order to deliver the scheme, the Council would need to acquire an interest in land that was currently owned and managed by Welsh Government. It was noted that any health and safety issues at the museum site were addressed, for example one part of the building had to be demolished a few years ago due to health and safety concerns. Members were informed that the survey work that was recently undertaken, was far more complex than usual and cost over £100k; the Council did not have the capacity to undertake this type of work in-house, and therefore it was externalised.

Reference was made to the point in the circulated report which stated that the current operating deficit was circa £60k per annum. It was noted that the museum did not have a card payment facility for visitors to use in the shop, which was a missed opportunity; the museum also didn't have a drink/snack machine which could have

potentially generated income. It was asked why the museum hadn't been provided with card payment facilities and if Neath Port Talbot Council had carried out income generation exercises at the site. Officers confirmed that one of the reasons behind establishing the Cefn Coed Working Group was to understand what was important and how to bring the facility into the 21<sup>st</sup> century, particularly in terms of commercial and income generation opportunities. The Committee was informed that there was previously a card facility at the site, however as the museum was only open four months of the year, the charges presented to the Council didn't make it practical to keep this facility; this was something that Officers would look into in the future. It was mentioned that there were card payment facilities that charged per transaction, which could be looked into for venues such as the museum.

With regards to the original proposal in 2019, Members queried why issues arose, for example with CADW. Members were informed that the grant application was put together very quickly, similarly with a lot of grant applications that were currently ongoing; this was not an unusual occurrence. As a consequence of this, it was noted that the Council did not have the opportunity to undertake all due diligence; they then had a very short period of time to deliver the scheme which was another issue in the matter.

A provisional sum of £200k was noted to have been made available by Welsh Government for the survey work; Officers were asked how much had been spent, and if any left-over monies would be allocated for future use on surveys. It was explained that around £110k-£115k had been spent on the surveys that were needed/were able to be completed; although Welsh Government allocated £200k, the Council was only provided with the amount which was needed to carry out the work. It was added that all surveys had now been carried out, and there was currently no further requirements for any additional surveys that could be undertaken at this time.

Members made reference to key priority 3 of the Valleys Action Plan which was Community Regeneration; Cefn Coed Colliery Museum was listed as an action to explore. It was asked if this action had ever been carried out, to which Officers stated that this would be one of the Cefn Coed Working Group's actions going forward when it was re-established.

Regarding the emerging health and safety issues contained within the report, it mentioned that the chimney stack had fresh spalling from

height; a grant was secured in 2014 which paid towards rebuilding parts of the stack. Members asked if Officers could confirm which parts of the chimney stack were now unsafe and if needed, could the Council apply for another grant to help with rebuilding. It was noted that the recent survey listed that the chimney stack was unsafe; the technical officers would need to look at this to identify which specific parts were unsafe. Officers confirmed that it was possible to apply for another grant and that they would need to look into this further to find out what was available at this current time.

A discussion took place in relation to the health and safety concerns detailed in the circulated report. It was asked why any of these issues hadn't been highlighted previously, assuming that all health and safety checks were carried out before the museum opened each year. In regards to the repair works, it was noted that there had been no available monies to undertake the work; the clear guidance from the different surveyor teams that carried out the work, confirmed that it would not be value for money to undertake those works in isolation and that they should be considered as an overall scheme of work. Officers stated that visual health and safety surveys were undertaken every year, however this particular survey was more in-depth and specialists were involved to help understand the nature of the problems and to give an indication on the cost of repairs.

Members asked who would be involved in the re-established Cefn Coed Working Group and stated that they would like to see Officers, Councillors and Neath Port Talbot Council employees who were passionate for the museum involved in this. It was noted that the current proposal listed that the Chair would be the Director of Education, Leisure and Lifelong Learning; Officers had taken advice from individuals who best knew the museum, and had knowledge of the history and the passion for it. The following individuals were currently proposed to be members of the Working Group:

- Heritage Education Officer
- Museum Manager
- NPT Tourism Manager
- NPT Head of Property and Regeneration or NPT Regeneration and Economic Development Manager
- NPT Property and Valuation Manager
- Senior Surveyor from Welsh Government
- Museums advisor for Welsh Government
- Representative from CADW

It was added that the Working Group would meet initially with the interested stakeholders and take a steer as to what was important for the facility and the community, before completing work including the due diligence that was needed; following this, the Working Group would come up with sustainable and appropriate proposals, before presenting them to the appropriate committee meeting. Officers confirmed that they would keep the interested stakeholders informed at all times and develop a communications plan which will also inform the local Members of how they will be communicated with and how often.

The Committee discussed the link with CADW in this particular project. Officers mentioned that they work frequently with CADW on various buildings, and appreciate the difficulty of their job which included persevering heritage; Officers worked with CADW to try and identify a solution that was acceptable for all parties.

It was suggested that the three local Members and the relevant Cabinet Member be involved in the Cefn Coed Working Group going forward as their input was highlighted to be valuable. Members were informed that the Head of Legal and Democratic Services, the Director for Education, Leisure and Lifelong Learning and the Head of Property and Regeneration would liaise in regards to coming up with a process to involve those mentioned.

Members expressed the potential of the site, particularly in terms of tourism. Officers confirmed that they were committed to exploring all possibilities for the future development of the site and hoped that the circulated report provided clarity on the recent work carried out. The Chief Executive encouraged those who had ideas in regards to what could be delivered at Cefn Coed Colliery Museum, to engage with Officers and also stressed the importance of engagement with the external agencies.

It was asked how this item was going to be dealt with going forward in terms of the Scrutiny arrangements; it was mentioned that this shouldn't be looked at in isolation, and instead be included as one part of a wider strategy for Neath Port Talbot. Members were informed that the Constitution detailed the different functions that were allocated to each individual Scrutiny Committee, however where there were crossing themes for issues, Joint Scrutiny Committees could be facilitated; in order to determine how the meeting should be facilitated, Officers would need to look into the subject matter and

also take on the views of the Chairs of the relevant Scrutiny Committees.

Members shared their concerns in relation to facilitating Joint Scrutiny Committees for this subject matter. In terms of portfolios, it was explained that the Cabinet Portfolios were determined by the Leader of Council and the convention within the Councils Constitution was that the Scrutiny portfolios should mirror the Cabinet portfolios; essentially the construction of the political portfolios was a matter for the Leadership. However, it was stated that if it was a wish of the Members, Officers could identify a mechanism within the framework and Constitution which would allow the right type of scrutiny to take place on this particular issue.

Officers provided clarity on the process of this particular issue going forward; the governance will be set up and then Officers will consult with the relevant Committees, and ensure that the progress reports go back to whichever Committee had been decided to have invested interest in this issue. Members were informed that there was a cross-over in portfolios; the issues around the estate and tourism falls within the Regeneration and Sustainable Development Scrutiny Committee's portfolio and the culture issues in regards to the museum falls within the Education, Skills and Culture Scrutiny Committee's portfolio.

A discussion took place in relation to the performance of the property and the surveyor work, and Members asked if Officers could provide further clarity on this. Officers confirmed that there was a rolling programme of surveys for all of the Council owned buildings; there was one surveyor undertaking surveys as well as covering as the Council's facilities management surveyor. It was noted that due to a number of factors such as the number of buildings, time element and the change in prioritisation of buildings, some buildings would only get surveyed once every 5-6 years, which meant that issues would not be identified regularly. As previously mentioned, this particular survey was a very specialist type of survey work; usually the Council's surveyors would complete a visual survey and raise any issues that they could physically see, which would then be looked into further with the Council's small in-house structural team. It was stated that the more complex sites would often require external survey work, which were expensive and take quite a while to complete. Officers highlighted that they were not shocked that more issues were identified when the external survey work was carried out, as it was often the case that a number of other issues will stem from the

original issue; it was also often required to find further funding in order to resolve the issues.

Officers were asked if the Council's current survey regime was as effective and sufficient as it needed to be. It was stated that in order to carry out more survey work than was currently carried out, a lot more surveyors would be required especially if they were to carry out the type of work that the external surveyors complete. Members were informed that Neath Port Talbot Council's surveyors complete site visits for all of the buildings, whereas some other Councils in Wales complete this as a desktop exercise.

Members expressed the importance of tourism and asked if more Tourism Officers could be added to the team in order to help with the current and future workloads. It was stated that in 2017 a decision was made to reintroduce the Tourism Team; it was decided at that time that more priority would be given to tourism. However, it was noted that the team was very small, consisting of only two members of staff. Officers explained that there was an opportunity through the scrutiny process, for Members to be updated on the work of the team; the Regeneration and Sustainable Development Scrutiny Committee currently received periodic updates on this topic. It was mentioned that the pandemic had considerably disrupted some of the programs that the team had been working on; though, there were plans to launch the new destination marketing brand later on in the year. Officers highlighted that as the Council moved forward and started to think of the recovery process, thought would need to be given to the priorities of the Council and how to utilise the available resources; however, there were always going to be limitations due to money and the Council also had to ensure that priority was given to the significant number of statutory duties.

Following concerns conveyed by Members in relation to the lack of development at the site, the Chief Executive provided assurances that there would be genuine commitment from Officers to look at how this site could be progressed. It was stated that the purpose of the report was to provide factual information and update Members in regards to Cefn Coed Colliery Museum, however Officers realised the disappointment that the loss of the grant had caused. It was added that Officers very much welcomed Members suggestions in relation to who could provide an input and help the Council explore how the site could be developed.



It was highlighted that there were a number of ways to ensure that all Members would be included in the structures set up in relation to this issue. As suggested, the Local Members and the Cabinet Member could be included into the structure and Officers would look at different ways in which this could be done; as well as consulting with the Members to make sure their views were taken into consideration. In terms of Scrutiny going forward, if it was the wish of the Education, Skills and Culture Scrutiny Members and the Regeneration and Sustainable Development Scrutiny Members to be involved in the ongoing monitoring of this item, then this could be done via the programming of the Scrutiny Forward Work Programmes.

The Committee discussed the formalities of the Cefn Coed Working Group; the Head of Legal and Democratic Services provided clarity on the matter and the functions that the Group would have and potential ways of how others could be involved in this.

It was proposed and agreed that the following be added to the recommendation contained within the circulated report:

- In relation to the Cefn Coed Working Group, the views of the three Local Members and the relevant Cabinet Member be sought at key intervals
- Reports be brought back to the relevant Scrutiny Committees at regular intervals with updates.

Following scrutiny, the report was noted.

**CHAIRPERSON**