

Minutes of the Education, Skills and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee

25 July 2024

Multi-Location Meeting - Council Chamber, Port Talbot & Microsoft Teams

Chairperson:	Councillor R.Phillips
Vice Chairperson:	Councillor D.Thomas
Councillors:	N.Goldup-John, L.Heard, C.Lewis, R.Mizen, S.Rahaman, P.A.Rees, S.H.Reynolds and P.Rogers
Co-opted Voting Members:	A. Amor and M.Caddick
Officers In Attendance	A.Thomas, P.Chivers, A.Thomas, I.Guy, C.Morris, C.Davies, C.Cole and K.Davies
Cabinet Invitees:	Councillors J.Hurley, N.Jenkins and C.Phillips

1. CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest received.

3. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the meeting held on 25 April 2024 were approved as an accurate record of proceedings.

4. **ANNUAL REPORT 2023 - 2024**

The committee noted and endorsed the Annual Report 2023/24 and commended to Council.

5. **TO CONSIDER ITEMS SELECTED FROM THE CABINET FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME:**

Members considered items from the Cabinet Forward Work Programme

(a) **The Cross Community Centre**

The Cabinet Member for Nature, Tourism and Wellbeing, advised members that the report detailed an administrative process to transfer ownership of the building between directorates, to enable future use of the building to be determined. A report on future use of the building will be brought to Cabinet in due course.

Members commented that organisations leasing community centres are responsible for the upkeep and maintenance of the building. Who is responsible for monitoring the maintenance of the buildings and ensuring that lease conditions are adhered to.

The Cabinet Member for Nature, Tourism and Wellbeing advised members that community centres are outsourced on full care and maintenance leases, therefore the responsibility to maintain and monitor the building falls to the tenant.

The Director of Education, Leisure and Lifelong Learning confirmed that there is no capacity within the local authority to inspect leased buildings.

Members questioned whether there would be an opportunity to recover any grant funding if a leased building had not been maintained.

The Cabinet Member for Nature, Tourism and Wellbeing confirmed that the lease on the Cross Community Centre has already been terminated and there is no scope for grant recovery.

Members commented that organisations need awareness of the responsibilities of taking on a full care and repair lease; the buildings are public assets. Members expressed concern that the facility was well used and questioned whether there was adequate provision at alternative venues within the area.

The Cabinet Member for Nature, Tourism and Wellbeing, commented that this was not directly related to the report but confirmed that many venues in the area such as; the Arts Centre, Leisure Centre, Library, The Heritage Centre and Town and Community Council facilities had available space to hire.

The Director of Education, Leisure and Lifelong Learning commented that when significant issues with the building condition were identified, new facilities were found for tenants quickly.

The Cabinet Member for Climate Change and Economic Growth stated that Shared Prosperity Fund (SPF) money had been allocated for building repairs and modifications of leased community buildings. There may need to be awareness raising to advise of the availability of funding to help maintain the condition of leased buildings.

Following scrutiny, members supported the recommendation outlined in the draft Cabinet report.

(b) **Draft Air Quality Action Plan (to follow)**

The Head of Planning and Public Protection advised members that the intention was for the report to be available in advance of this Scrutiny Committee meeting, but, despite the efforts of officers and appointed consultants this has not been possible. With the agreement of the Chair, a verbal update will be provided and the report will be available at the next scrutiny committee meeting. The Cabinet consideration of this report will be moved to 2nd October.

A verbal update was provided to members.

Officers advised members that legislation requires the local authority to produce an Air Quality Action Plan where there are designated Local Air Quality Management Areas such as Margam / Taibach. The current Air Quality Action Plan has been in place since 2012, to deal with particulate matter, PM10 and the plan and the process requires periodic review. The report being brought to cabinet will ask members

to agree for officers to go out for consultation and engagement on the draft action plan.

The draft Air Quality Action Plan has been prepared with assistance from Ricardo, the Authority's Air Quality Consultants. Ricardo have worked on analysis and annual data reviews for air quality. It was highlighted that the Action Plan will include a summary of the current air quality in Neath Port Talbot, it will identify the air quality priorities and ultimately present priority actions to improve air quality going forward. A steering group has already been established, members include Health Board, Highways, Natural Resources Wales and Public Health Wales. The steering group have contributed to the draft action plan and as part of the consultation process, will be re consulted for formal comments, along with other consultees. A report will be brought to scrutiny in September, providing a summary and legislative context, and highlighting what cabinet will be asked to consider and note.

The Chair thanked officers for the verbal update.

Members referred to a news report that 50mph zones on motorways, had not affected levels of pollution and the restricted limit had been removed in some parts of England. Members questioned whether the restricted 50mph area from Port Talbot to Llandarcy had impacted on pollution levels

Officers confirmed that the 50mph restriction on the M4 was imposed by Welsh Government for air quality reasons. Reports have been undertaken by Air Quality Control Consultants into the implementation and effect, but it is uncertain if this information has been published yet. Officers can signpost members to information on the Welsh Government website around this. Officers confirmed that it is an area of interest, monitoring has been undertaken with low-cost air quality sensors in air quality areas around the motorway. This work is due to be reviewed. It was noted that some of the sensors have not been reliable in terms of data capture, but some analysis can be undertaken. Welsh Government grant money has been received in relation to a nitrogen dioxide diffusion tube study to measure air quality. Real time data will not be available, but results are expected within 18 months and will be feedback to Welsh Government.

The Head of Planning and Public Protection advised members that the Draft Air Quality Action Plan is a technical report in nature, it

would be useful if members could advise officers in advance of any questions, so it can be ensured that information is available to answer members questions appropriately.

(c) **Events and Festivals Review**

The Cabinet Member for Nature, Tourism and Wellbeing provided a brief overview of the report contained within the agenda pack.

Members welcomed the report. The current arrangements can be discouraging to organisations in arranging community events. Members questioned whether the new arrangement would be a one stop shop for arranging licences. Members noted the charging range from £25 to £100, could be prohibitive for smaller scale events.

The Cabinet Member for Nature, Tourism and Wellbeing confirmed the proposed team would co-ordinate event paperwork and internal council permissions. They will not manage application for statutory instruments such as premises licensing, however, they will be able to signpost to relevant departments. The suggested charges are modest for smaller events, costs are necessary to cover the costs of the service. It was noted that 80% of applications will be from small event organisers which will impact on officer time. Whilst the local authority was keen to encourage community events, there is a need to recover some costs. The charges will represent good value for money for organisers due to the level of support that will be provided. Fees for larger events are flexible to enable commercial fees to be set, where applicable.

Members enquired if there would be a sliding scale of charges for smaller events.

The Cabinet Member agreed that would be taken on board.

Officers advised members the starting fee for £25 related to events without any commercial angle. Events became commercial, when a third of traders or stalls in the event were commercial traders. It was noted that most community events are likely to fall within the lower end of the charging structure. The fee was a commitment to take the process seriously, analysis has shown staff time is wasted when event organisers abandon the process. The emphasis is on supporting event organisers especially in the community sector to build capabilities, resilience and experience.

Members noted that many Councillors set up community events to promote community cohesion. Members questioned whether the charges table in the draft document could be clearer. This would allow smaller organisations to fundraise throughout the year to cover costs. It would be useful for the criteria for the event to be classed as a commercial event to be included in the table.

The Director of Education, Leisure and Lifelong Learning confirmed that the table containing fees and charges would be as clear as possible.

The Cabinet Member for Nature, Tourism and Wellbeing confirmed that the intention was to remove barriers as far as possible.

Members questioned whether street closures on non-council land would come under the team's remit.

Officers confirmed that the team would liaise with Highways alongside the event organisers, to reach solutions. Officers confirmed that they would look at alternatives to street closures. If statutory permissions are required, staff would assist organisers to contact Highways to navigate the process.

Members referred to page 105 of the report and the Remembrance Day parades that were supported in Neath and Port Talbot. Members questioned whether there are any plans to support a similar event in the Pontardawe Town Centre.

The Cabinet Member for Nature, Tourism and Wellbeing stated that the British Legion had stopped insuring members to organise these events and the Council had stepped in to ensure the parades took place.

Officers confirmed that in Pontardawe, it is believed that organisations were in place to carry the parade forward. If this is not the case the team will look at how they can assist.

The Chair confirmed that the British Legion in Pontardawe would be unable to run a Remembrance Day event this year, contact will be made with the team to discuss further.

The Cabinet Member for Climate Change and Economic Growth stated the importance of early engagement to ease staff pressure.

Officers commented that the report has a spend to save proposal to fund staff. Currently, the full team is not in place and staff resources will need to be prioritised. Staff will be available to advise and signpost where possible.

Following scrutiny, members supported the recommendation outlined in the draft Cabinet report.

6. **TO CONSIDER ITEMS FROM THE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME**

There were no items selected from the Scrutiny Forward Work Programme.

7. **PERFORMANCE MONITORING**

There were no Performance Monitoring reports for consideration.

8. **SELECTIONS OF ITEMS FOR FUTURE SCRUTINY**

Officers advised members of new items that had been added to the Cabinet Forward Work Programme and members were given the opportunity to request further items for consideration.

Members questioned whether it would be possible to present the tables in a different format to make the information clearer.

Members requested an update on the feasibility study for the Pontardawe Swimming Pool.

The Director of Education, Leisure and Lifelong Learning confirmed that the feasibility work has been approved by Cabinet and the Terms of Reference are being drawn up, this can be brought to members for information. It is expected that the outcome of the work will be reported back to members around March 2025. It was agreed that this item would be added to the Scrutiny Forward Work Programme at an appropriate time.

Members requested the School Reorganisation report be brought forward from January 2025 to December 2024.

Members noted the Forward Work Programme.

9. **URGENT ITEMS**

There were no urgent items.

Councillor R.Phillips

Chairperson