

**ECONOMIC AND COMMUNITY REGENERATION SCRUTINY
COMMITTEE**

(Committee Rooms A/B - Neath Civic Centre)

Members Present:

9 December 2016

Chairperson: Councillor A.Llewelyn

Councillors: C.P.Golding, A.Jenkins, Mrs.M.A.Lewis,
Mrs.S.Paddison and A.Taylor

Officers In Attendance PWalker, A. Collins, N.Evans and W.John

Cabinet Invitees: Councillors M.L.James and A.J.Taylor

1. **MINUTES OF THE ECONOMIC AND COMMUNITY SCRUTINY
COMMITTEE HELD ON 28 OCTOBER 2016**

The Minutes were noted by the Committee

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The Chair verbally updated the Committee on a response that was received from the first Minister Mr C Jones AM in relation to European Funding. Members requested that the Letter be circulated to all members.

3. **TO RECEIVE THE SCRUTINY FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME
2016/2017.**

The Forward Work Programme was Noted by the Committee

5. **LIBRARY SERVICES SERVICE REPORT CARD**

Members considered the Library Services report card and stated that it should also pay regard to the report on the Cabinet Board agenda

in relation to the Annual Report on Library Standards to avoid duplication.

Members asked whether the support to Community libraries was sufficient given that the volunteers within the community may not have sufficient experience. Officers stated that qualified librarians are always available to answer any queries.

Officers stated that there was a difficulty in collecting the relevant information from Community Libraries over and above book lending but it should be understood that generally across the United Kingdom there is a decrease in the usage of Community Libraries.

Members asked what work is undertaken in Community Libraries to promote e-books and it was confirmed that the same promotion is undertaken in Community Libraries as in those run by the Council.

Members asked for their thanks to be recorded for the work that is undertaken in the Community Libraries and that a letter of that effect is sent to all Community Libraries.

In relation to the Neath Port Talbot run Libraries Members asked when the All Wales Management System would be introduced. Officers stated that this has commenced in North Wales and would be introduced across Wales within the next two years.

Members were concerned that the budget for the Library Service was almost £1m short of the suggested allowance from Welsh Government and if we spent the allowance would the Council have hit all standards. It was confirmed that the standards would have been met by using the whole allowance. It was stated that three Councils had hit all standards this year and they had spent their full allowance.

Members noted that the team should be congratulated on what they have achieved as it is now not just a library service but goes wider and they constantly deliver. Officers stated that Welsh Government acknowledges that it is a good service and is meeting the statutory standards.

Members asked for a comparison against other Welsh Councils. Officers stated that Swansea and Carmarthenshire have sought to protect their libraries. However, the Vale of Glamorgan have recently started to transfer their libraries out and because of this they spent a

significant amount of money on Court costs in relation to Rhoose Library.

Officers stated that the service had gone from the top ten performing four years ago to around 15th or 16th currently.

Members asked what discussions are held with Welsh Government as it was felt that while they set the standards they also reduce the budgets and it was questioned whether the standards were fit for purpose. Officers stated that this has been raised with Welsh Government and they are now in the process of developing a new framework and the Council has provided an input into this.

Following Scrutiny the report was noted.

6. **QUARTER TWO HIGHLIGHT REPORT - PROSPERITY FOR ALL**

Members considered the Quarter Two Highlight Report on the Corporate Improvement Objective – Prosperity for All.

Members were asked to note that the team had delivered a significant piece of work in short timescales. The team had delivered on an Enterprise Zone which usually takes years but had been done in a matter of weeks. Members asked for more information in relation to this and asked for a relevant representative to attend a future meeting. Officers stated that this is a Welsh Government initiative and an officer from Welsh Government would be invited to a meeting to explain in more depth.

Members asked whether the former fire station was still sustainable. Officers commented that New Sandfields Aberavon had submitted a business plan that had suggested it was sustainable and officers were aware that there may be some issues and they would be keeping a close eye on it.

Following scrutiny the report was noted.

7. **PRE-SCRUTINY**

The Committee scrutinised the following matters:

Cabinet Board Proposals

7.1 Quarter 2 Performance Monitoring – Education

Members considered the report on performance monitoring for the quarter two from the Education Directorate.

Members asked why the number of complaints had reduced dramatically. It was confirmed that the previous year's complaints were generally in relation to one event that was organised by an external company.

Concern was expressed that the Council was 22nd in Wales for the number of visits to sports and fitness centres and Members asked whether private sports teams and clubs are counted. Officers stated that this indicator is an anomaly and many councils record the information in different ways.

Following scrutiny the report was noted.

7.2 Quarter 2 Performance Monitoring – Environment

Members considered the report on performance monitoring for the quarter two from the Environment Directorate.

Members noted that they had some problems in relation NPT homes particularly when it came to planning issues. Officers stated that is this was the case Members should contact them directly and they will strive to get it sorted.

Following Scrutiny the report was noted.

8. **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.

9. **PRE-SCRUTINY**

The Committee Scrutinised the Following Private Matters

Cabinet Board Proposals

9.1 Celtic Leisure Presentation

Members received a presentation from representative of Celtic Leisure.

Members were asked to note the increase in new business that was generally down to the opening of the Aberavon Sea Front Leisure facility.

Celtic Leisure stated that since the opening of the new leisure facility there had been high demand for swimming lessons and on occasion's children as old as 13 had enrolled on beginner courses.

Members asked whether budget gyms affected the new facility and it was confirmed that they are aware of the competition but that they re-invest any profits into facilities so that people will only want to use them.

Members asked whether it was difficult to cut management costs and not decrease current standards. Celtic Leisure stated that they need to push forward and increase their income so that standards are maintained and costs not cut. An example was in relation to the Gwyn Hall where they must be astute because any cost cutting could result in the loss of opportunities to premier films as they are released.

Following scrutiny the presentation was noted.

9.2 Verbal Update

Members were asked to note that a previous contract in relation to digital advertising schemes that the Council had been interested in had now fallen through as the original company had been taken over by another who had no interest in the Contract. Officers would investigate alternatives.

CHAIRPERSON

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