

POLICY AND RESOURCES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

(Committee Rooms 1/2 - Port Talbot Civic Centre)

Members Present:

11 January 2017

Chairperson: Councillor D.W.Davies

Vice Chairperson: Councillor A.Jenkins

Councillors: A.Carter, M.Harvey, Mrs.L.H.James,
Mrs.D.Jones, A.Llewelyn, A.R.Lockyer,
L.M.Purcell, S.Rahaman and I.D.Williams

Officers In Attendance Ms.S.Morris, D.Rees, Mrs.K.Jones, S.Griffiths,
Miss A.O'Donnell, N.Evans, R.George and
Miss.C.Davies

Cabinet Invitees: Councillors P.A.Rees and A.N.Woolcock

Observers PC.C.Noblett

1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

Cllr. M.Harvey – Report of the Head of Corporate Strategy and Democratic Services on Community Cohesion - Neath Port Talbot Local Delivery Plan 2016/17 as he works for South Wales Police.

The following Officers disclosed their interests on the Urgent Report of the Head of Corporate Strategy and Democratic Services in relation to the Review of Fees Paid at Local Elections as they were employed to undertake specific roles during the election period, and withdrew from the meeting during the discussion and voting thereon:-

Mrs K.Jones
D.Rees
R.G.George
N.Evans

Miss.C.L.Davies

2. **MINUTES OF THE POLICY AND RESOURCES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE HELD ON 15 DECEMBER 2016**

The Committee noted the minutes.

3. **SCRUTINY FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME 2016/2017**

The Committee noted the Forward Work Programme.

4. **COMMUNICATIONS & DIGITAL SERVICES REPORT CARD - QUARTER 2 2016-17**

Members considered the Communications and Digital Services Report Card.

Members commended that Modern Apprentices are being taken on to help with the Welsh Language Standards.

Members asked what SOCITM stood for. Officer's confirmed that SOCITM stood for Society of IT Managers. It was noted that SOCITM had awarded the Council's website with a 2* rating. Members queried what the highest rating was. Officers clarified that it was 4*.

Members queried what the reason was for supporting data for quarter 2 in 2015-16 was lower than quarter 2 in 2016-17 for the percentage of customers accessing Digital Channels. It was highlighted that because more services have now been put online and website had been improved the demand is much greater.

Following Scrutiny the report was noted.

5. **PRE-SCRUTINY**

Cabinet Board Reports

The Committee scrutinised the following items:

4.1 Community Cohesion - Neath Port Talbot Local Delivery Plan 2016/17

Members considered a report that provided information on the priorities and performance of the Community Cohesion in Neath Port Talbot.

It was noted that there would be an all Members Seminar on PREVENT for all members and Senior Officers to attend on 6th February 2017.

Members asked What Mate Crime stood for. Officers confirmed that Mate Crime was a recent phrase used where people take advantage of vulnerable friends.

Members highlighted that appendix 1 did not include enough evidence to allow members to fully scrutinise, however it was raised that appendix 2 contained objectives and aims which provided more detail. Officers highlighted that the seven strands of Community Cohesion in the Delivery Plan were what Welsh Government had provided. However, Neath Port Talbot had chosen three outcomes that were a local Priority as there were measures already in place for the Council to satisfy themselves that the other four outcomes were being met.

Members asked why there had been an increase in Hate Crime. It was noted that the Law had recently changed the view of Hate Crime which is receiving a lot more attention.

Members asked why the Anti-Slavery Training was cancelled. Officers confirmed that due to a lack of monies available to the Authority although it was a priority with Welsh Government Neath Port Talbot had to prepare a training plan on the issues that were highlighted as a priority with the Community.

It was asked if there had been any Modern Slavery referrals within Neath Port Talbot. It was confirmed that South Wales Police had not received any reports of any Modern Slavery referrals.

Members stated that reports should be reported back annually rather than quarterly, so that the information can be from one year to the next.

6. **URGENT ITEMS**

Review Because of the need to deal now with the matter contained in Minute No 6 below the Chairman agreed that this could be raised at today's meeting as an Urgent Item pursuant to Section 100B(4)(b) of the Local Government Act 1972.

7. **REVIEW OF FEES PAID AT LOCAL ELECTIONS.**

The following Officers reaffirmed their interests in this item and withdrew from the meeting:

Mrs K.Jones, D.Rees, R.G.George, N.Evans and Miss.C.L.Davies

Members received an overview of the Review of Fees Paid at Local Elections as detailed within the circulated report.

Members queried what the fees were, when previously reviewed in 2012 and queried whether the fees should be reviewed at each and every electoral event. Officers explained that the fees previously agreed prior to the 2012 Local Government elections were detailed in Members meeting papers. In addition, it was pointed out that election fees are kept under constant review for each and every electoral event. However, prior to every set of ordinary Local Government elections it is the specific responsibility of the Returning Officer to review and agree the local fees and charges structure to ensure they remain appropriate to administer the relevant local polls.

Members asked why the referendum fee had not been taken into account. Officers highlighted that fees and charges regarding national referenda are governed by separate legislation and subject to specific funding allocated by UK Government, via the Electoral Commission.

Members asked if the English Authorities are updating their fees. Officers highlighted that while local elections will be held in all Welsh local authorities, local elections in England will only take place in certain parts of the country. As such it will be up to each individual Returning Officer as to whether they choose to amend their local fee structure as appropriate.

Members queried whether the fees for the Returning Officer are agreed nationally. Officers explained that the UK Government set the

level of fees and charges for all Parliamentary elections and in setting all local fees the Returning Officer has due regard to these national fee levels.

Members asked whether the work of a Returning Officer was part of the Chief Officers normal council duties. Officers highlighted that the position of Returning Officer was not currently part of the job description for any of the Council's Chief Officers. In addition, when conducting all duties as Returning Officer the relevant appointee assumes personal responsibility and liability for the administration of the electoral event.

CHAIRPERSON

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