

CABINET SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

(Council Chamber - Port Talbot Civic Centre)

Members Present:

27 June 2018

Chairperson: Councillor A.N.Woolcock

Vice Chairperson: Councillor S.Rahaman

Councillors: S.E.Freeguard, M.Harvey, H.N.James, A.Llewelyn, S.Miller, J.D.Morgan, S.Paddison, S.M.Penry, L.M.Purcell and J.Warman

Officers In Attendance A.Evans, H.Jenkins, S.Phillips, K.Jones, C.Griffiths and C.Davies and J.Davies

Cabinet Invitees: Councillors D.Jones, R.G.Jones, E.V.Latham, A.R.Lockyer, P.A.Rees, P.D.Richards, D.Cawsey, S.H.Reynolds and S.A.Knoyle

Observers E.Bradfield

1. DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

Cllr. D. Cawsey	Report of the Assistant Chief Executive and Chief Digital Officer re: Valleys Action Plan because he is an unremunerated trustee of DANSA and Dove Workshop
Cllr. S. Reynolds	Report of the Assistant Chief Executive and Chief Digital Officer re: Valleys Action Plan because she is the director of Canolfan Maerdy

2. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

Members raised a query in relation to the Annual Governance Statement 2017/18 and questioned whether the Corporate Risk Management Policy had been reported to Audit Committee. Officers stated that the intention had been to report to Cabinet first before reporting to Audit Committee, but there had been a delay in the

timescale. Officers explained that the policy would now go to Audit Committee in July.

Members raised a query in relation to the Revenue Outturn and Reserves Position Statement 2017/18, and questioned whether more information was available as previously requested regarding school reserves as per point 3.4 on page nine. Officers stated that the information would be reported to the next Education Skills and Culture Scrutiny Committee. Officers added that the figures for the surplus and reserves is readily available but a report would provide some context.

Members requested an amendment to the attendance on the minutes, and for Cabinet Member Councillor Peter Rees to be added as he was present at the meeting.

Officers requested an amendment on page 8 under the Annual Governance Statement 2017/18 in the last paragraph for information to be reported to Cabinet Board instead of Audit Committee.

Members commented that at the last meeting it was agreed that all consultations should be on the front page of the Authority's web page, but this change had not taken affect yet.

The Committee noted the minutes.

3. PRE-SCRUTINY

The Committee chose to scrutinise the following items:

Cabinet Board Papers

3.1 Swansea Bay City Deal

The Committee received information in relation to the Swansea Bay City Deal as contained within the circulated report.

Members welcomed the report and thanked officers for their hard work. Members added that the deal was good for the County Borough, particularly as the borrowing cost for the Authority had been reduced from £21 million to £6.3 million. Members commented that working on a regional basis would help create jobs within the County Borough. Members referred to the section contained in the report regarding the Authority being the main Scrutiny lead, and questioned whether the membership would mirror that of the current

Regeneration and Sustainable Development Scrutiny Committee. Officers informed Members that the arrangements were not known at this stage, and that the Assistant Chief Executive and Chief Digital Officer and the Head of Legal Services were making enquiries into this. Officers added that scrutiny arrangements were different across the four authorities, therefore consideration would be required regarding the preferred model.

Members queried whether there was any flexibility in relation to the projects identified in the report and whether they could be subject to change in the future. Officers confirmed that projects could be changed as the framework made provision for this. Officers stated that some projects could have stronger business cases than others, and priorities could change in the future. Officers added that some projects were also at a more advanced stage than others that were in their infancy.

Members questioned whether the Steel Science/National Innovation Centre project was in a strong position, as this was an important initiative which would help support and sustain the local steel industry. Officers stated that conversations were ongoing with Swansea University where the project would be based on the Fabian Way campus. Officers reported that the Leader had been in discussion with Ken Skates, Assembly Member, regarding the matter. Officers informed Members that another related project was being explored outside of the City Deal.

Members stated that good public relations and effective communication was essential to keep the public updated on developments. Officers concurred, and stated that communication with the public was a high priority. Officers added that the benefits of the City Deal would be communicated widely.

Members raised concerns that the deteriorating local transport arrangements could exclude and isolate citizens, and prevent them from receiving the benefits of the City Deal. Members added that many transport providers were withdrawing their local services. Officers stated that transport issues were not being addressed under the remit of the City Deal; however officers agreed that a transport project should be undertaken separately to underpin the deal, with strong governance arrangements established. Officers informed Members that this issue was widely acknowledged by all partners. Officers added that the Authority were undertaking various pieces of

work to address the issues being encountered within the county borough.

Members queried whether it was proposed to combine the Scrutiny and Audit functions. Officers stated that the Audit function would be the responsibility of Carmarthenshire County Council, and that the Scrutiny function would sit with the Authority, and there were no plans to combine the two. Officers explained that even though Audit and Scrutiny sat under the same heading in the agreement, they would be separated out. Officers informed Members that the terms of reference would provide further details, and that there were existing models for Scrutiny in place that could be replicated such as the Education Regional Working (ERW) model.

Members queried whether there would be an emphasis on reducing the carbon footprint under the Steel Science/National Innovation Centre project, and if National Resources Wales (NRW) be involved. Officers stated that this element was outside the scope of the project and the city deal framework, but the Flexis project which was set up separately and was based on Fabian Way was incorporating this element. Officers informed Members that the Flexis Project worked in partnership with Tata Steel, Welsh Government (WG) and three universities. Officers added that a presentation on the project would be brought back to the Committee in the future. Members questioned whether NRW should be involved at the early stages of the projects. Officers informed Members that NRW would have to be involvement in the projects as they were the regulatory body. Officers stated that issues with air quality in the area were well documented; however robust analysis was needed in light of inaccuracies with the recent World Health Organisation data. Officers explained that the steel works alone were not responsible for the air quality issues encountered in the area, and that the motorway was also a contributor. Officers added that the Flexis project would provide the opportunity for an informed debate.

Members queried whether the City Deal could help existing projects within the county borough such as the acquisition of the former Carnaud/Metal Box building. Officers stated that the City Deal could help indirectly as existing projects being undertaken by the Authority were outside the framework for the deal, but being part of the city region could attract interest from businesses wanting to invest and start up business in the county borough. Officers added that risks around Brexit needed to be factored in and clarified.

Following scrutiny, the Committee were supportive of the proposals to be considered by Cabinet.

3.2 Corporate Risk Management Register

The Committee received information in relation to the Corporate Risk Management Register as contained within the circulated report.

Officers informed Members that the intention in future was for individual Cabinet Boards to monitor the relevant sections of the risk register on a six monthly basis.

Members queried why the opencast east pit was no longer monitored or included on the register. Officers stated that this was included on the operational risk register instead. Officers explained that Cabinet dealt with the strategic element of the risk register, while the relevant Cabinet Boards reviewed the operational and detailed registers reported by the relevant officers. Officers added that the review of the arrangements for assessing and managing risk were carried out at Audit Committee to ensure that the process was fit for purpose.

Members queried whether the method for assessing risks and concerns were the same. Officers stated that the mechanisms were the same but the way that they were scored and evaluated were slightly different, and was set out in the report.

Following scrutiny, the Committee were supportive of the proposals to be considered at Cabinet.

3.3 Valleys Action Plan

The Committee received information in relation to the Valleys Action Plan as contained within the circulated report.

The Committee welcomed the report and thanked the Task and Finish Group for their hard work.

Members commented that the test track to Onllwyn was a positive move and that there was a train track from Cwrt Sart to the Dulais Valleys which was still in good condition that could be utilised. Members suggested that a conversation with WG on the matter could be useful. Members added that if instated, the train could transport

people to and from the metal box for employment in the future potentially.

Members commented that the WG have a Valleys agenda, and queried whether it would be possible to dovetail with them in order to increase the impetus before the focus of WG changes. Members added that some elements could be Authority led, while others could be WG led. Officers stated that there was a role for the Council and a role for WG with regard to the Valleys agenda, particularly on transport issues. Officers commented that there was a need to put pressure on WG to look at transport policies, but it was also important for the Authority to deliver on this front also. Officers stated that the Authority would look at their transport policies from a Valleys perspective. Officers referred to the issues around planning which were highlighted in the action plan, and explained that it was very difficult to persuade developers to build in the Valley areas, and that the Authority would welcome initiatives from WG.

Members commented that the Valley areas were experiencing a change of dynamics with regard to population levels, with younger people moving away because they were not confident with the future of the Valleys. Members stated that partners such as Abertawe Bro Morgannwg University Health Board were providing support in these areas, but it was becoming increasingly difficult to sustain services in the Valley areas with a decreasing population. Members suggested that the Public Service Board needed to provide a firmer direction on the future of the Valleys.

The Leader commented that the Authority had recently been successful in negotiations with a transport provider to keep a bus service in operation in the Afan Valley following a petition from citizens. The Leader explained that the Council had to work with the private transport providers and the constraints that they were experiencing but emphasised the importance of providing transport options for citizens to access work, education and hospitals. The Leader stated that anchor organisations and third sector organisations all had a part to play in the Valleys. The Leader informed the Committee that a number of schemes and initiatives had already been launched which demonstrated the Council's commitment to the Valleys areas, such as the Canolfan Maerdy child care service in Tairgwaith which was a long term scheme, and the DANSA community transport service which was due to be reviewed. The Leader added that the Rhondda Tunnel opening would provide benefits for Neath and Port Talbot, and the Onllwyn test track was

also a positive step. The Leader raised concerns that Goytre and Pelenna were not mentioned in the action plan, and stated that this would need to be reviewed. Officers informed the Members who led on the Task and Finish Group that an item regarding Community Transport was on the agenda at the Streetscene and Engineering Cabinet Board on the 20th July, and that their views from a Valleys perspective would be welcomed.

Members emphasised the importance of building on the work carried out by the group and bringing it to fruition. Members reminded the Committee that similar pieces of work had been carried out previously and had become short lived initiatives. Members stated that it was important to keep the public engaged and up to date with developments as their input would be required. Members questioned how the Council would progress with the priorities identified in the action plan. Members added that the work carried out needed to form the basis of a core strategy. The Leader informed the Committee that the Leader and Deputy Leader would review the action plan with the aim of incorporating as many action points as possible into future strategies. The Leader stated that the Task and Finish team would remain in place in a reviewing capacity. Members queried whether a group could be set up with Valley ward Members to review the action plan on a six monthly or a yearly basis. The Leader stated that legal advice would be sought on the matter.

The Committee made a recommendation to Cabinet that a Valleys Consultation Group be created to review the action plan periodically, and for Ward Members from Valleys areas to be included in the group.

Following scrutiny, the Committee were supportive of the action plan, and recommended that Cabinet oversee and monitor the progress on the action plan.

3.4 Quarterly Performance Management Data 2017/2018 – Quarter 4 Performance (1st April 2017 – 31st March 2018)

The Committee received information in relation to the Quarterly Performance Management Data 2017/2018 – Quarter 4 Performance (1st April 2017 – 31st March 2018) as contained within the circulated report.

Members commented that the Waste Management figures were positive, and that the Social Services Unqualified Staff Reviews were

now at 100% which was also very positive. Members stated that it was good to see a compliment received regarding Licensing staff.

Members mentioned that given the staff shortages and pressures on the service, the Planning Department were performing reasonably well.

Members queried the purpose of school exclusions. Officers stated it allowed space and time for pupils to reflect, and for the schools to assess the situation and look at any underlying problems effecting pupils.

Members referred to indicator 103 on p.223 and queried why the number of calendar days had increased for the provision of Disabled Facilities Grants (DFGs), and raised concerns that without additional funding performance could decrease further. Officers stated that £3 million a year was allocated to DFGs, but there needed to be a better use of resources. The Leader commented that the cost for equipment and adaptations was expensive, and the demand on the service outweighed the resources available. The Leader added that the Council needed to look at recouping costs when people moved property, and that equipment needed to be recycled.

Members raised concerns in relation to the Statements of Special Educational Needs, and queried whether performance needed to be reviewed. Members questioned whether there had been a decrease in psychologists. Officers explained that there had been no decrease in the number of psychologists; however the advice received from other agencies sometimes was not provided in a timely manner. Members queried whether the issues laid with Abertawe Bro Morgannwg University Health Board. Officers informed Members that a draft statement may require input from a number of agencies sometimes, and this was not always done in a timely manner. Members stated that Neath Port Talbot were the lowest performing compared to other Local Authorities. Officers stated that services were now being more pro-active and were chasing up agencies more frequently.

Members referred to the issues detailed on p.172 with regard to homelessness as a result of issues with private land lords. Officers informed Members that private landlords was an issue that Environmental Health could provide advice on and report to the Committee in the future. Officers explained that there had been changes to the framework around homelessness, and that the

Director of Social Services Andrew Jarrett could provide further information on the matter.

4. **URGENT ITEM**

Because of the need to deal now with the matter contained in the Minute No. 4(i) 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.

Reason:

Due to the time element.

5. **PRE-SCRUTINY**

The Committee considered the following matter:-

Cabinet Proposal

5.1 Welsh Language Standards

The Committee received information in relation to the Welsh Language Standards as contained within the circulated report. Officers updated the Committee that there was still a lot of work in progress to implement the standards, and that work will continue through the established Welsh Language Standards Task and Finish group.

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

6. **FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME 18/19**

The Committee noted the Forward Work Programme.

CHAIRPERSON

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