

**REGENERATION AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT SCRUTINY  
COMMITTEE**

**(Committee Rooms A/B - Neath Civic Centre)**

**Members Present:**

**12 July 2019**

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

**Vice Chairperson:** Councillor R.L.Taylor

**Councillors:** S.Bamsey, D.Cawsey, J.Evans, N.T.Hunt,  
H.N.James, C.J.Jones, S.M.Penry and  
S.Pursey

**Officers In Attendance:** N.Pearce, S.Brennan, C.Morris, N.Headon and  
N. Jones

**Cabinet Invitees:** Councillors A.Wingrave and L.Jones

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1. **MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING**

That the Minutes of the previous meeting held on 24 May, 2019, be approved.

2. **PROBLEMATIC EMPTY HOUSES (PRIVATE DWELLINGS)**

The Committee received the report in relation to how Problematic Empty Homes were dealt with in Neath Port Talbot.

It was highlighted that, to date, the problematic empty homes database had 456 empty homes assessed, 42 of which had been risk assessed as 'high priority' for pro-active enforcement action to bring them back into use. A priority status of high, medium or low was in place for pro-active enforcement action.

It was noted that two officers were now employed by the Council who were dedicated to working with this problem, although Welsh Government procedures still needed to be followed.

Officers updated the Committee on the Enforced Sale Policy which was introduced by the Environmental Health and Trading Standards Section during January 2017. Officers explained that this was a complex and lengthy legal procedure.

Officers were currently in the process of drafting a letter to Welsh Government identifying problems experienced on a day to day basis, including lack of resources. The letter would be circulated to Members on completion.

It was noted that an online complaint referral system was available on the Neath Port Talbot Website, which explained the procedure to deal with problematic houses and allowed residents to report an empty property. It was also possible to upload a photograph of the property. This information was then sent directly to the Environmental Health.

Officers explained that from April 2020 there would be a new Council Tax Policy, which would no longer allow exemptions for reduced Council Tax on empty properties, this would help towards reducing the number of empty houses in Neath Port Talbot.

Following Scrutiny, it was agreed that the report be noted.

### 3. **ACTIVE TRAVEL**

Members received an update on the implementation of the Council's Active Travel Integrated Network Map.

Officers explained that for the current 2019/20 financial year, Neath Port Talbot had been awarded £319k core funding for further design, minor improvement works, land negotiations and promotion schemes. The intention was to utilise the funding for identified schemes and activities, as listed in the circulated report.

It was noted that Active Travel was defined as walking and cycling for everyday journeys, but did not include journeys for recreational or social reasons, therefore when the Authority submitted a bid Welsh Government guidelines would need to be adhered to.

Members agreed that residents needed to be informed and understand the cycle routes that were available, members were encouraged to promote the routes available in their wards.

Following Scrutiny, it was agreed that the report be noted.

4. **QUARTER 4 PERFORMANCE INDICATORS**

Members received an overview of the report on Quarter 4 Performance Indicators.

It was noted that the figure shown on Performance Indicators - “number of visitors to our town centres” was predominantly footfall in Neath. It was explained that counters were situated at different locations although predominantly Neath.

Members questioned why there were no indicators for “new business start-up” and it was explained that the Council did assist new businesses’ but this was dealt with by the Business Support team.

Following scrutiny, it was agreed that the report be noted.

5. **FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME 2019/20**

The Committee was informed that a Forward Work Programme Workshop would take place after today’s meeting.

The Committee noted the circulated Forward Work Programme.

6. **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 item 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.

7. **URGENT ITEMS**

With the permission of the Chair the following were raised as urgent items for discussion at today’s meeting pursuant to Section 100A(4) and (5) of the Local Government Act 1972.

Reasons for Urgency:

Due to the time element.

8. **PRE-DECISION SCRUTINY**

The Committee received an overview of the following private urgent Cabinet Board items:-

Cymmer Sports Hall, Cymmer, Port Talbot

The Committee was supportive of the proposal to be considered by the Cabinet Board.

Lease of Harbour Court, Port Talbot

The Committee was supportive of the proposal to be considered by the Cabinet Board.

**CHAIRPERSON**