

CABINET SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

(Council Chamber - Port Talbot Civic Centre)

Members Present:

30 October 2019

Chairperson: Councillor M.Harvey

Vice Chairperson: Councillor S.Rahaman

Councillors: S.apDafydd, S.E.Freeguard, N.T.Hunt, S.K.Hunt, S.A.Knoyle, S.Miller, R.Mizen, S.Paddison, L.M.Purcell, S.M.Penry and A.N.Woolcock

Officers In Attendance: S.Phillips, H.Jenkins, G.Nutt, K.Jones, A.Thomas, C.Griffiths, K.Warren, H.Jones, C.Furlow-Harris, R.Headon, C.Davies and T.Davies

Cabinet Invitees: Councillors C.Clement-Williams, D.Jones, L.Jones, R.G.Jones, E.V.Latham, A.R.Lockyer, P.A.Rees, P.D.Richards, A.J.Taylor and A.Wingrave

1. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

The following Member made a declaration of interest at the commencement of the meeting:

Councillor S.Rahaman	-	Re Item 10 on Cabinet Board papers - Strategic Equality Plan 2015-2019: Draft Annual Report 2018-2019 and Extension of the Strategic Equality Plan 2015-2019 until April 2020, as he is Secretary/Trustee of NPT BME Community Association.
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2. **MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING**

That the minutes of the previous meetings, held on 25 September and 2 October, 2019, be approved.

3. **PRE-DECISION SCRUTINY**

The committee scrutinised the following cabinet items:

Revenue Budget Monitoring 2019-20

Members queried the overspend within the Household Waste Recycling Centre, specifically the reason that wood waste needed to be transported to Devon to be recycled. Officers explained this was due to Devon's higher capacity for recycling wood, which would contribute positively to Neath Port Talbot's recycling targets. Officers within the environment section were working with the Cabinet Member to reduce the spending around recycling whilst still improving on the amount recycled.

The underspends and overspends in the Social Services, Health and Housing budget were discussed. It was noted that the removal of some Welsh Government reviews had led to independent reviews being carried out. Some service users and their families had been used to certain packages of care, and were not always initially supportive of having these altered.

Officers explained that within the refuse and recycling service, sickness and bank holidays caused extreme pressures on workloads. Existing rubbish rounds were being re looked at, and there had already been a cut of funding for refuse built in for 2020/21.

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.

Members discussed the current budget pressures in relation to Alderman Davies Church in Wales Primary School.

The meeting resumed in open session.

Further areas of discussion included:

- The reserves position
- Intermediate Care Fund – ‘Neglect Project’
- Out of county placements
- Reduction in numbers of Looked After Children (LAC).

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

Treasury Management Monitoring 2019-20

Investment by the Council was discussed, and Members noted that whereas England had General Powers of Competence to be able to invest in any project they had scrutinised, Wales currently does not. This makes the investment process, in areas such as shopping centres or art work, for example, more difficult for Councils within Wales.

Although Members were generally in favour of large scale investments, currently the risks involved were too great, as well as the absence of General Powers of Competence, which would potentially be brought in with the introduction of the new Local Government Act. The Council presently must rely on the general powers of wellbeing that exist under the Local Government Act 2000.

The acquisition of pieces of art work was discussed. As well as the need for the involvement of the auditors, and a full business case being produced, officers emphasised the need to look for returns on investments that underpin the services the Council provides.

Following scrutiny, the report was noted.

Strategic Equality Plan 2015-2019: Draft Annual Report 2018-2019 and Extension of the Strategic Equality Plan 2015-2019 until April 2020

Members discussed the progress made over the period 1 April 2018 to 31 March 2019 in meeting the Public Sector Equality Duty, in line with the equality objectives set out in the Strategic Equality Plan 2015-19.

The role of the Independent Domestic Violence Advisors was clarified, along with who they report to and where they were based.

The Scrutiny Chair for Social Services wanted it to be recorded that herself, and a representative from Unison, took part in the event for council staff to celebrate 100 years of women's suffrage, in addition to the participants listed in the report.

Exclusions among Special Educational Needs (SEN) children were discussed, and Members noted that Neath Port Talbot has the highest number of SEN children in Wales. It was noted that a chaotic home life contributes to these exclusions, so a whole range of support mechanisms needed to be in place, including involvement from social services.

Other discussion topics included:

- Early entry for GCSE exams at key stage 4
- Permanent exclusions and prevention strategies
- All Wales performance data
- Direct Payments Support (DPS)

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

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

The Committee noted the Forward Work Programme for 2019/20.

CHAIRPERSON