

Cabinet Scrutiny Committee

(Via Microsoft Teams)

Members Present:

25 June 2020

Chairperson: **Councillor M.Harvey**

Vice Chairperson: **Councillor S.Rahaman**

Councillors: S.apDafydd, S.E.Freeguard, S.A.Knoyle, A.Llewelyn, R.Mizen, J.D.Morgan, S.Paddison, L.M.Purcell, S.H.Reynolds and A.N.Woolcock

Officers In Attendance S.Phillips, K.Jones, H.Jenkins, A.Evans, A.Jarrett, N.Pearce, C.Griffiths, H.Jones, C.Morris, M.Roberts, C.Furlow-Harris, D.Griffiths, C.Jones, S.Curran, A.Manchipp, C.Plowman, T.Davies and C.Davies

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

1. Declarations of Interests

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

Councillor M.Harvey	Re Healthy Relationships for Stronger Communities Strategy (Cabinet papers), as he is employed by the South Wales Police.
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2. Pre-decision Scrutiny

The committee scrutinised the following cabinet items:

Budget Update and Monitoring 2020 - 2021

The budget was discussed in line with the current impact of Covid-19 and the difficulties envisaged for setting a budget for 2021 – 2022.

Concerns were raised as to whether the Authority would comply with Audit Wales guidelines in relation to holding an adequate level of reserves as some authorities were contemplating issuing Section 114 notices. It was queried whether the Local Authority would increase reserves naturally over time or whether Welsh Government would replace the gap with additional funding. Officers explained to Members the financial position from March through to June, detailing the situation regarding claims which had already been reimbursed and claims that the Local Authority is still currently waiting for a response on. The Director of Finance and Corporate Services explained that within the report it is assumed that £2m will be reimbursed but hopefully the full £4.2m would be received. Meaning that the £10.8m deficit would reduce. Members were reassured that further updates would be provided throughout the year and this will continue to be monitored.

Members queried whether they would receive budget seminars to help set the budget. Officers explained that due to the current officer demand due to Covid-19 the seminars wouldn't likely be held before September/October 2020.

Members were reassured that the Council would pursue Arts Council funding to support the anticipated overspend on the Princess Royal Theatre and Pontardawe Arts Centre Theatre. There was also reassurance provided in relation to the underspend in Social Services department. This was due to the Social Services department being unable to recruit during the Covid-19 Pandemic.

Discussions took place around the expectation that services will resume as normal during the recent outbreak of Covid-19, however, the Committee were informed that this was not the case.

Following scrutiny, the committee was supportive of the proposals to be considered by cabinet.

Healthy Relationships for Stronger Communities

Members welcomed the Healthy Relationships for Stronger Communities Strategy.

Discussions took place around the community cohesion aspect of the Strategy and the fact that this would promote community cohesion. Members queried this as it was felt that it would be difficult to promote community cohesion if without community cohesion to begin with. Members asked how this Strategy would link up with other strategies to ensure there is promotion of community cohesion. Officers welcomed the feedback and highlighted that the National Training Framework, is intended to raise awareness of domestic violence all across the community. It was noted that the National Training Framework actions in the Strategy would address these issues.

Members were informed that the Strategy was a Joint Strategy between the Health Board and the Local Authority. It was noted that the Health Board had provided minor amendments to the Strategy following the Strategy being brought before Cabinet. Therefore, it was asked that members consider an additional recommendation giving the Cabinet Member for Community Safety and Public Protection delegated authority to sign off minor amendments.

Following scrutiny, the Committee was supportive of the proposals to be considered by Cabinet, inclusive of the additional recommendation as detailed above.

Neath Port Talbot Local Development Plan (LDP) 2011 - 2026

The Chair highlighted that the Cabinet Scrutiny Committee Members had minor comments to raise in relation to the Draft Local Development Plan Review Report, however the main discussion would be dealt with in Council.

Discussions took place around the timescale of the review of the Local Development Plan. Members were reassured that whilst the formal commencement of the review had been formally delayed due to Covid-19, work on the evidence base was underway and Members would be encouraged to engage with the officers to support the process of the review. It was noted that the full review process would take 3 and a half years to complete.

The Chair of the Planning Committee highlighted to members that the review will address the issues around Houses of Multiple Occupancy.

Following scrutiny, the committee was supportive of the proposals to be considered by cabinet.

CHAIRPERSON

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