

**Environment, Regeneration and Streetscene Services Scrutiny
Committee**

**(Multi-Location Meeting - Council Chamber, Port Talbot & Microsoft
Teams)**

Members Present:

22 July 2022

Chairperson: Councillor S.Pursey

Vice Chairperson: Councillor T.Bowen

Councillors: W.Carpenter, A.Dacey, R.Davies, N.Goldup-
John, C.James, S.Grimshaw, K.Morris,
S.Rahaman and L.Williams

1. Chair's Announcements

The Chair noted that apologies had been received from Councillor Shelia Penry.

The Chair noted that the Members of the Scrutiny Committee had agreed to scrutinise the following items from the Cabinet Board agenda:

- Item 6: Commercial Property Grant: Water Street Business Centre, Port Talbot
- Item 7: Commercial Property Grant: Units 1 and 2 Commercial Buildings, Talbot Road, Port Talbot
- Item 8: Commercial Property Grant: 20 Queen Street, Neath
- Item 10: Neath Port Talbot CBC Highway Technical Design Guide for Residential, Commercial and Industrial Developments

2. Declarations of Interest

Councillor Stephanie Lynch declared an interest in regards to Item 6 listed on the Cabinet Board agenda. She explained that she worked at Water Street Business Centre in Port Talbot, but she was not involved with the grant and it did not impact her.

3. **Pre-Decision Scrutiny**

Item 6: Commercial Property Grant: Water Street Business Centre, Port Talbot

Item 7: Commercial Property Grant: Units 1 and 2 Commercial Buildings, Talbot Road, Port Talbot

Item 8: Commercial Property Grant: 20 Queen Street, Neath

The Chair explained that Members had raised a few questions in regards to the commercial property grants, and he proposed to take these questions together.

Members queried whether the grant would be available for work that had already been carried out and completed. Officers confirmed that the grant was usually paid out once the work had been completed, as it needed to be checked and signed off by a quantity surveyor. It was confirmed that specifically in regards to Item 7, Units 1 and 2 Commercial Buildings, Talbot Road, the occupiers had not received a confirmation letter of the grant, as it had not yet been approved by Members.

The officers agreed to confirm with Councillor R. Davies whether or not registered charities could apply for 100% grant funding for commercial properties.

It was confirmed to the Committee that applicants did not have to use council approved contractors but they did have to go out to tender for three contractors and the independent quantity surveyor would then check the costings.

It was explained that the Placemaking Grant noted in the report was a Welsh Government initiative under the Transforming Towns programme and this would be dealt with by the regeneration team.

Members of the Committee queried the proposed grant offer of £47,966.08 in regards to 20 Queen Street Neath, as it seemed costly for a new roof. It was confirmed that the cost of the grant appeared to be very high as the entire roof structure required replacing, as opposed to just the roof covers; the grant included the works to remove the current roof and structure and replace it fully.

The Committee requested that all Members of the Council received a list of all grants offered by the council.

Following Scrutiny, the recommendations were supported to Cabinet Board.

Item 10: Neath Port Talbot CBC Highway Technical Design Guide for Residential, Commercial and Industrial Developments

The officers introduced the report which sought endorsement of the new Highway Technical Design Guide for Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council.

It was explained that the Minister of Economy and Transport initiated a Taskforce to undertake a review on un-adopted highways. A part of that review entailed the standardisation of highway design and specifications in an All Wales Common Standards document for use by all local Authorities. The Taskforce comprised of Welsh Local Authorities, and other key stakeholders including the House Builders Federation, County Surveyors Society and Welsh Local Government Association.

The aim of the design guide was to bring a more consistent approach to enable Highway Agreements, such as section 38 highway adoption agreement and also section 278 agreements for off-site work that relate to new developments, these could then be successfully completed for the adoption of roads serving new developments.

The design guide had been endorsed by Welsh Government and had begun to be put in to practise across Wales. It was also highlighted to the Committee that the guide was a live document, as there were currently legislative changes taking place and updates to the active travel guides had been agreed. The document was in development and was due to be reviewed again in 2023, and there may be further updates to consider then.

It was noted that the purpose of the document was to be read with all other current legislation and policies in regards to highways. It was further confirmed that WLGA were keen to add the Active Travel guidance to the design guide, and this work was ongoing.

The Chair thanked the officers for their introduction of the report. He noted that Members had concerns that the document may not always

be fully up to date, with all relevant legal and policy provisions, and wished to propose an amendment to the recommendations.

RESOLVED: That the Scrutiny Committee agreed to recommend the below amendment to the Cabinet Board for consideration:

Having due regard to the screening Integrated Impact Assessment it is recommended that Members approve the New Highway Design Guide for implementation subject to an appropriate disclaimer being placed on the Council's website highlighting that some legal and policy provisions may not be up to date and drawing attention to compliance with Llwybr Newydd, PPW11 and specific reference to the Active Travel Design Guidance 2021 (confirming this Council's commitment to Active Travel and sustainable transport). In addition, future amendments to the document to be brought back to Scrutiny for review prior to submission to Welsh Government by CSS or following updated versions from Welsh Government.

Following Scrutiny, and in addition to the amendment above, the recommendations were supported to Cabinet Board.

4. **Urgent Items**

There was none.

5. **Access to Meetings**

This was not required.

6. **Pre-Decision Scrutiny of Private Item/s**

This was not required.

CHAIRPERSON