

Minutes of the Education, Skills and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee

27 September 2022

Port Talbot Civic Centre / Remotely - Hybrid

Chairperson:	Councillor R.Phillips
Vice Chairperson:	Councillor D.Thomas
Councillors:	W.Carpenter, M.Crowley, N.Goldup-John, J.Henton, J.Jones, C.Lewis, R.Mizen, P.A.Rees, S.Renkes, S.H.Reynolds and D.Whitelock
Co-opted Voting Members:	L.Newman
Co-opted Non Voting Members:	R. De Benedictis
Officers In Attendance	I.Guy, H.Lervy, A.D.Thomas, P.Walker, R.Crowhurst, K.Windsor-Brown, N.Jones, A.Harris, A.Thomas.
Cabinet Invitees:	Councillors J.Jurley and N.Jenkins

1. **CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

2. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Declarations of interest were received from:

Cllr N Goldup-John - Disposal of Land at Neath Leisure Centre – Personal (Member of Neath Cricket and Neath Tennis Clubs)

3. **PRE-DECISION SCRUTINY**

Disposal of Land at Neath Leisure Centre

Members were presented with information relating to the disposal of land at Neath Leisure Centre, as detailed within the report circulated.

Members advised that there is a sub-lease within the Sub Aqua Club who lease a garage adjacent to the leisure centre. They have been advised that there is no provision for them at the new centre, however they will be able to use the new swimming pool for their weekly sessions.

Members asked, when development of the site takes place, that consideration is given to leisure, wellbeing, tourism and the Council's decarbonisation programme. Officers advised that they would take on board the comments and pass to the Head of Regeneration, to whom the responsibility of the building will pass.

Members queried if any assistance was offered to the Sub Aqua Club in finding alternative accommodation. Further, the IIA identified that there was no impact on centre users, however Members disputed this. Members said that there was an impact as one of the centre users was being directly affected by the disposal of the land by being given notice on their lease.

Officers confirmed that there has been some discussion with the Sub Aqua Club about alternative accommodation, however there would be costs associated with this. Currently the Sub Aqua club does not have to pay accommodation costs. The Sports Council are unable to offer any grant to support the club. It is understood the Cabinet Member is trying to investigate alternative accommodation for the club.

Members asked the officer to amend the IIA to take into account the impact identified on the current users.

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

Welsh in Education Strategic Plan

Members were presented with information relating to the Welsh Education Strategic Plan (WESP), as detailed within the report circulated.

The plan notes that annual updates will be provided to Members. Members queried if officers considered annual updates sufficient. Officers advised that they would be agreeable to reporting back on a higher frequency if members wished them to do so. However, an annual report will allow for a full view of all the activity throughout the year.

In consideration of the objectives of the WESP, members queried if and how these would be taken into consideration in future decisions of the authority. Officers anticipated that the seven objectives identified within the plan would have group leaders, and these leaders would meet on a regular basis throughout the year. The leaders would report back to the WESP Forum, and the forum would then report to the relevant committee.

Members were in general agreement that an annual report would suffice.

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

Play Sufficiency Assessment

Members were presented with information relating to the Play Sufficiency Assessment, as detailed within the report circulated.

Officers advised that the consultant will be amending the report with regards to the number of wards and an updated report would be circulated. The report referred to both four and five wards without supervised play. The correct number is five wards.

Members queried how many qualified staff currently work in the early years' provision in schools.

Officers outlined how evidence for the report was gathered and what it took into consideration as part of the assessment. It was confirmed

that officers are also working closely with Neath Port Talbot College with regards to the remit of the training of early years' staff.

Members noted that antisocial behaviour in parks was seen as a barrier to play. Members queried how officers were working with the police to address this issue. Officers noted that antisocial behaviour could be considered various types of behaviour.

The action plan identified the need to consider the membership of the Play Strategy Implementation Group and who is required to be a member to assist with taking these actions forward. The police are identified as one of the partners who need to be engaged within the process to help take it forward.

Members queried what was being done with the five areas that are not covered by play provisions. Officers advised that, although the report may indicate that there is no specific provision within the ward boundary, this does not necessarily reflect the position, as the play provision may simply sit just outside the boundary. Officers advised that a map outlining the position of the provisions would perhaps provide a more indicative position of current play provisions in relation to houses.

Members asked for a definition of supervised play. Officers confirmed the play sufficiency assessment takes into account play, sport, leisure and culture for children aged 0-17. The report takes into account desktop and face to face research. Members expressed their concern that a lot of the identified play provision was missing from the report. Officers advised that the document is a living document and an annual update is provided to Welsh Government following the end of the financial year.

In relation to the budget identified within the report, Members queried how much can be done within existing hours and funding. The budget for the current year did propose an increase in youth funding, and members asked for confirmation that this would continue. With regards to new funding, Members queried if any had yet been identified. Officers recognised that a piece of work would need to be carried out to strengthen communications with the wider services within the Council.

Concern was expressed about the delays in refurbishment works to current play areas, including closure of play areas.

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

4. **URGENT ITEMS**

There were no urgent items.

Councillor R.Phillips

Chairperson

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