



JOINT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS ON MONDAY, 22ND FEBRUARY 2021 AT 5.00PM

PRESENT:

Councillor J. Pritchard (Chair)
Councillor G. Kirby (Vice Chair)

Councillors:

C. Andrews, E.M. Aldworth, A. Angel, C. Bezzina, P. Bevan, C. Cuss, A. Collis, W. David, D.T. Davies, M. Davies, K. Etheridge, M. Evans, A. Farina-Childs, J. Fussell, A. Gair, L. Harding, D. Havard, A. Hussey, V. James, G. Johnston, B. Jones, C. Mann, B. Miles, A. Leonard, B. Owen, T. Parry, D. Preece, D. Price, J. Roberts, M. Sargent, R. Saralis, G. Simmonds, J. Simmonds, S. Skivens, C. Thomas, Williams, W. Williams, A. Whitcombe, L. Whittle, B. Zaplatynski.

Also, in Attendance Non-Scrutiny Committee Members:
Councillor N. Dix and B. Jones.

Co-opted Members:

Mr D. Davies, Mr C. Luke, Mrs P. Ireland, Mr. M. Western,

Cabinet Members:

Councillors S. Cook (Cabinet Member for Social Services), N. George (Cabinet Member for Waste & Public Protection), C. Gordon (Cabinet Member for Corporate Services), S. Morgan (Cabinet Member for Economy & Enterprise), J. Ridgewell (Cabinet Member for Environment & Infrastructure), E. Stenner (Cabinet Member for Finance, Performance and Customer Services), R. Whiting (Cabinet Member for Learning and Achievement), L. Phipps (Cabinet Member for Housing and Property) and Councillor P. Marsden (Leader of Council).

Officers:

C. Harchy (Chief Executive), Mark S. Williams (Interim Corporate Director – Communities), D. Street (Corporate Director Social Services), R. Edmunds (Corporate Director Education and Corporate Services), S. Harris (Head of Financial Services and Section 151 Officer), S. Richards (Head of Education Planning), C. Forbes-Thompson (Scrutiny Manager), A. West (21st Century Schools).

WEB-CASTING FILMING AND VOTING ARRANGEMENTS

The Chair reminded those present that the meeting was being filmed but would not be live streamed, however a recording would be available following the meeting via the Council's website – [Click here to view](#). He advised that decisions would be made by Microsoft Forms.

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors J. Bevan, L. Binding, D. Cushing, K. Dawson, N. Dix, C. Elsbury, C. Forehead, E. Forehead, J. Gale, D. Hardacre, D. Harse, L. Jeremiah, S. Kent, G. Oliver, D. Poole. and T. Middleton (Co-opted Member – Education Scrutiny Committee)

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillors D.T. Davies, C. Elsbury and A. Hussey declared personal interests in relation to Agenda Item No. 5 – Caerphilly Wellbeing and Place Shaping Framework as Members of the South Wales Fire and Rescue Authority.

Councillor M. Adams also declared a personal interest in relation to Agenda Item No. 5 – as he lived in close proximity to the Pontllanfraith Comprehensive School Site, which would be one of the proposal coming forward for consideration.

3. MINUTES – 15TH DECEMBER 2020

It was moved and seconded that the minutes of the 15th December 2020 be approved as a correct record, by way of Microsoft forms and verbal confirmation this was agreed by the majority present

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Joint Scrutiny Committee held on the 15th December 2020 be approved as a correct record.

4. MINUTES – 14TH JANUARY 2021

It was moved and seconded that the minutes of the 14th January 2021 be approved as a correct record, by way of Microsoft forms and verbal confirmation this was agreed by the majority present.

RESOVLED that the minutes of the Joint Scrutiny Committee held on the 14th January 2021 as a correct record.

5. CAERPHILLY WELLBEING AND PLACE SHAPING FRAMEWORK

The Chair advised the Committee that they would be taking questions on each Wellbeing Objective in turn and that each objective would be introduced by the relevant Cabinet Member, with the Leader of Council and Chief Executive introducing the report in the first instance.

Consideration was given to the report which set out proposals for a suite of projects that would form the basis of a county borough wide Wellbeing and Place-shaping Framework. The Leader and Chief Executive outlined the Place-shaping programme and explained how it would sit on a strategic platform. Members were advised that as the county borough emerges from the Covid pandemic it was essential to provide a route-map for our communities which offers them a sustainable and resilient future. Within this context it was imperative to understand the needs and challenges of our constituent communities and the impact of the investments and interventions made to date and those required in the years ahead.

The funding base for this ambitious programme was outlined and it was noted that some projects would be funded directly by Council capital, some a combination of Council capital and external funding and some being wholly funded externally.

In terms of the staffing resources required to deliver this programme the Chief Executive emphasised that this would require a growth bid and without this investment it would be impossible to deliver proposals under consideration and achieve the wider community and social benefits that these projects would bring to the county borough.

Members were referred to section 5.6 of the report and the table contained therein which fully detailed the investment programme 2017-2020.

The Chair thanked the Chief Executive and the Leader of Council for their introduction and invited each of the Cabinet Members to introduce the programmes for their respective portfolios starting with the Cabinet Member for Education.

The Cabinet Member for Education referred the Joint Scrutiny Committee to section 5.8 of the Officers report which detailed the proposals for Education under Wellbeing Objective 01 and highlighted the proposed areas of investment throughout the county borough, following which, Members questions were welcomed.

Clarification was sought in relation to leisure provision in the Upper Rhymney area as detailed on page 20 of the report as to where this proposal would be situated. Members were advised that several possible sites were currently being worked through and there were several opportunities for development.

Members then queried the proposals for vulnerable learners detailed for Pontllanfraith and whether this would be a new build. It was confirmed that this would more than likely be the adaptation of an existing structure.

Members welcome recent improvements to the GVA although there was clearly more work to be done, this was viewed as a positive step forward.

The link between the 21st Century Schools Programme and the Place-shaping Programme was queried and if 21st Century Schools proposals had been amended as a result. It was confirmed that as time progressed there had been changes made because of shifting priorities, however assurances were given that consultation on 21st Century Schools had been ongoing with the Education Scrutiny Committee.

Members welcomed proposals at Idris Davies School as the provision of a 3G pitch there had considered a priority for a number of years and would be welcomed for community use by local clubs as well as the school.

The Cabinet Member for Economy and Enterprise referred Joint Scrutiny Committee to the proposals under Wellbeing Objective 02 and highlighted the proposed areas of investment throughout the county borough, following which, Members questions were welcomed.

Reference was made to the proposals in relation to the exploration of a direct wire connection between Tredomen and the AD plant at Gelligaer, which would secure electricity at a more attractive rate than direct from the grid. Local Members in the Nelson and St Cattwg wards expressed severe concern regarding the proposal and sited historic issues with the operator of the Bryn Group and referenced a current contamination incident. The feeling was expressed that these issues needed to be resolved before proposing more business be directed to this company. These members wished it placed on record that they would strongly oppose any further investment with this operator and would not wish to be associated with any such future proposals.

The Cabinet Member for Homes and Places referred Joint Scrutiny Committee to the proposal under Wellbeing Objective 03 and highlighted the proposed areas of investment throughout the county borough, following which, Members questions were welcomed.

Members welcomed the opportunity to build new council homes but queried if there was anything the authority could do in relation to private rentals and bringing those empty properties into use, or to encourage landlords to improve. It was noted that the Housing Team were currently working on projects with private landlords to see how this could be improved.

Members emphasised the need for sustainability to be an integral part of all forthcoming Council development particular around boilers etc to ensure that we were future proofing new builds. It was noted that this was already a high priority and new builds would be aligned with sustainable standards.

Members debated affordable housing and what constituted 'affordable' it was felt that housing prices must be suitable for the area of the development so that local people would not be priced out.

The Cabinet Member for Environment and Infrastructure referred Joint Scrutiny Committee to the proposal under Wellbeing Objective 04 and highlighted the proposed areas of investment throughout the county borough, following which, Members questions were welcomed.

Reference was made to the investment proposal in relation to the A469 New Tredegar to Pontllytyn and the Local Member for the Twyn Carno Ward emphasised the ongoing issues with this particular road, given its strategic importance the Member sought assurance that this would be a priority going forward. Reassurances were given that the concerns raised were shared by the authority and this critical road link would be priority and the project proposals would rely on successful engagement with local ward members on a way forward.

Members queried whether there would be sufficient charging points within the county borough in order to support the proposed vehicle replacement programme and clarification was given on the proposed investments required in order to put the infrastructure in place and it was noted that this would include working in partnership with Western Power.

Members also welcomed proposals to increase Park and Ride provision at Llanbradach.

The Cabinet Member for Social Services, Environment & Infrastructure and Economy and Enterprise referred Joint Scrutiny Committee to the proposal under Wellbeing Objective 04 and highlighted the proposed areas of investment throughout the county borough, following which, Members questions were welcomed.

A Member referenced the proposed investment in the Caerphilly Basin and the potential development of a key brownfield site for mixed use facilities. It was noted that a number of sites were being explored as it was very early days for these proposals, however the need for this type of development was recognised and would be welcomed within the Caerphilly Basin.

Members expressed concern with regard to the impact of COVID on Town Centres and welcomed any investment opportunities that would help them to thrive again.

Clarification was sought with regard to the Centre for Vulnerable Learners which included indoor/outdoor sporting provision and the possible impact that this might have on plans for Pontllanfraith Leisure Centre. Assurances were given that these were two separate matters and the plans for the centre were to secure the best use of the facility and provide a net gain for the area.

Members referenced town cleansing programmes and concerns were expressed in relation to the losing battle with litter that was happening throughout the borough and Members agreed that they would like additional investment to be made in this area.

The Community Empowerment Fund was debated, and Members were asked to encourage local communities to approach the fund for community improvement it was agreed that further information of the Community Empowerment Fund would be circulated to all Members.

The Cabinet Member for Social Services referred Joint Scrutiny Committee to the proposal under Wellbeing Objective 06 and highlighted the proposed areas of investment throughout the county borough, following which, Members questions were welcomed.

Clarification was sought in relation to the funding for the various proposals and how they would be secured. Officers outlined the work of the Regeneration Board and how various funding pots would be put together in order to secure the necessary funding.

Members expressed their frustration that general points of clarification had been left to the end of the meeting and that the procedures for this meeting had unnecessarily lengthened the process.

A concern was expressed that the report before Members was to high a level and the public would want to see local specifics and therefore felt it to be premature, assurance were also sought that Trade Unions had been consulted in relation to the transformation agenda and the impact that this would have of staff resources.

Officers explained that as each and every project came forward it would be subject to a comprehensive business case that Members would be able to scrutinise and there would be full consultation with local ward members as proposals progressed.

A motion was moved and seconded that the report be deferred to allow for a 3 month consultation period the outcome of which be reported to Cabinet in the autumn. By way of Microsoft Forms and verbal confirmation and in noting there were 6 for, 28 against and 1 abstention the motion was declared lost.

The comments of the Joint Scrutiny Committee and the Officer's report were noted.

The meeting closed at 8.00pm