



ENVIRONMENT AND SUSTAINABILITY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

**MINUTES OF THE MULTI-LOCATIONAL MEETING HELD IN PENALLTA HOUSE
AND VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS ON TUESDAY, 6TH DECEMBER 2022 AT 5.30 P.M.**

PRESENT:

Councillor D.T. Davies MBE - Chair
Councillor A. Hussey - Vice-Chair

Councillors:

M. Adams, R. Chapman, C.J. Cuss, N. Dix, M. Evans, A. Leonard, D.W.R. Preece,
H. Pritchard, J.E. Roberts, S. Williams

Cabinet Members:

Councillors C. Morgan (Waste, Leisure and Green Spaces)

Together with:

M.S. Williams (Corporate Director for Economy and Environment), R. Hartshorn (Head of Public Protection, Community and Leisure Services), Jared Lougher (Sport and Leisure Development Manager), S. Mutch (Early Years Manager), B. Miller (Play Sufficiency Officer), M. Jacques (Scrutiny Officer), S. Hughes (Committee Services Officer), R. Barrett (Clerk)

Also in attendance:

Councillor J. Pritchard

ANNOUNCEMENT

The Scrutiny Committee extended their deepest condolences to Councillor Nigel Dix on the recent loss of his mother, and Councillor Dix thanked Members for their kind words during this sad time.

RECORDING, FILMING AND VOTING ARRANGEMENTS

The Chair reminded those present that the meeting was being live-streamed and recorded and would be made available following the meeting via the Council's website – [Click Here to View](#) Members were advised that voting on decisions would be taken via Microsoft Forms.

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors C. Elsbury, A. Gair, S. Kent and C. Wright.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest received at the commencement or during the course of the meeting.

3. MINUTES – 25TH OCTOBER 2022

It was moved and seconded that the minutes of the meeting held on 25th October 2022 be approved as a correct record and by way of Microsoft Forms and verbal confirmation (and in noting there were 10 for, 0 against and 1 abstention) this was agreed by the majority present.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Environment and Sustainability Scrutiny Committee held on 25th October 2022 (minute nos. 1 – 10) be approved as a correct record.

4. CALL-IN PROCEDURE

There had been no matters referred to the Scrutiny Committee in accordance with the call-in procedure.

5. ENVIRONMENT AND SUSTAINABILITY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME

Mark Jacques (Scrutiny Officer) presented the report, which outlined details of the Environment and Sustainability Scrutiny Committee Forward Work Programme (FWP) for the period December 2022 to March 2023.

Members were asked to consider the FWP alongside the Cabinet work programme and suggest any changes prior to publication on the Council's website. The Scrutiny Committee noted the details of the reports scheduled for forthcoming meetings.

It was moved and seconded that the report recommendation be approved. By way of Microsoft Forms and verbal confirmation (and in noting there were 12 for, 0 against and 0 abstentions) this was unanimously agreed.

RESOLVED that the Forward Work Programme as appended to the meeting papers be published on the Council's website

6. CABINET REPORTS

It was confirmed that there had been no requests for any of the Cabinet reports listed on the agenda to be brought forward for discussion at the meeting.

REPORTS OF OFFICERS

Consideration was given to the following report.

7. PLAY SUFFICIENCY ASSESSMENT

The Cabinet Member for Waste, Leisure and Green Spaces presented the report, which informed the Scrutiny Committee of the Welsh Government statutory duty requiring Local Authorities to secure sufficient play opportunities for children through a Play Sufficiency Assessment every three years.

The report provided a brief overview of the requirement of the duty and updated Members on the sufficiency of play opportunities and the priorities identified in the assessment submitted to Welsh Government (WG) in June 2022. The legislation came into effect in July 2014 with the publication of "Wales, a Play Friendly Country". The duty requires Local Authorities to secure sufficient play opportunities, so far as reasonably practicable. There are many examples of how improved play opportunities have resulted from excellent partnership work; however, the biggest challenge remains the heavy reliance on external sources of funding to deliver many aspects of play provision. The Play Sufficiency Assessment is a statutory requirement of Local Authorities and is required every three years.

The Scrutiny Committee were asked to note the requirements of the statutory duty requiring Local Authorities to secure sufficient play opportunities for children, as far as reasonably practicable, and the contents of the latest Play Sufficiency Assessment 2022 as appended to the report.

The Scrutiny Committee discussed the report and a Member referred to the section of the Play Sufficiency Assessment in relation to Open Spaces and outdoor unstaffed designated play spaces where the criteria had been identified as not being fully met, and he sought assurances that this is an area that will be addressed going forward. Jared Lougher (Sport and Leisure Development Manager) confirmed that the Play Sufficiency Assessment set out the position at the current time and that a Play Sufficiency Officer has now been appointed who will be able to drive the action plan forward to address those areas that have been identified as requiring attention.

A Member sought clarification on the funding in place to deliver the play opportunities identified in the Play Sufficiency Assessment. Mr Lougher explained that the Council utilises existing departmental budgets that are available to deliver these opportunities, together with any external grant funding that the Council is able to secure, such as through WG's "Summer of Fun" programme of funding.

The Member asked what the Council are doing to maximise grant funding opportunities and also asked how the Council can make play areas more inclusive and accessible in order to be used by disabled children. Mr Lougher confirmed that in terms of external funding opportunities, WG look to allocate relevant funding across local authorities and make Officers aware if any such opportunities arise. Service managers also use their knowledge to pursue other pots of funding and are proactive in ensuring the Council applies for these grants wherever possible.

In terms of disabled user access to play areas, Mr Lougher confirmed that his team works closely with Parks and Countryside Services with the aim of making all Council playgrounds fully accessible to children with disabilities and added that if the Member knew of any specific locations requiring attention, then Council Officers would be happy to work with the Member to clarify and address any concerns that he may have. The Member also suggested that it would be useful for the Council to engage with relevant local organisations and parent groups in order to improve play access for disabled children.

Clarification was sought on whether monies from the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) and Section 106 agreements could be used to fund improvements across parks. Mr

Lougher explained that although this is the responsibility of a separate service area, his team do work collaboratively with Parks and that there has been significant investment over the past five years in playground equipment through Play Sufficiency funding, and that this investment is strategically located where it is felt there is the greatest need.

Mark S. Williams (Corporate Director for Economy and Environment) confirmed that in relation to the Section 106 query, in cases where the agreement as part of a development specifies the creation of a playground or play equipment, then 106 money is set aside and will be spent on that purpose. However, he emphasised that not every development will have a Section 106 agreement and not every Section 106 agreement will require the creation of a play facility.

A Member referred to the following-up of gaps identified across the Play Sufficiency Assessment in terms of information provision, service delivery and policy implementation, and asked if this would include looking at provision already in place that might need reviewing or require re-assessment. Sarah Mutch (Early Years Manager) explained that the Council examines all provision, which is not just limited to playgrounds, but also relates to provision in environments such as childcare settings and holiday clubs. The Early Years team are expanding the Flying Start programme and have recently launched a small capital grant for registered play provision, which is accessible to those childcare providers registered through Care Inspectorate Wales. These providers will be able to bid for the grant to update their existing premises, which therefore equates to a whole range of support focused on inclusion, equality, Welsh language and play resources.

A Member referred to Section 5.5 of the report which stated that many aspects of the Play Sufficiency Assessment are also reliant on external sources of grant funding (if secured) that are short-term in nature and may impact on the sustainability of some of the actions. In view of this, the Member asked if the Council would be looking to secure one-off grant funding for long-term facilities or if there is a need to be selective when applying for grants. Mrs Mutch explained that the Council examines the overall strategic picture when applying for grants and considers aspects such as the current environment and how the Council can maximise the use of these grants to make provision sustainable and accessible to the community. By way of example, the 21st Century Schools capital programme examines how the Council can make these premises available for community use and benefit outside of school hours and during school holidays. The challenges of short-term funding was acknowledged and it has been recognised that the Council needs to maximise its corporate building assets for long-term use so that they are not reliant on this annual funding.

Having considered the contents of the report, Members noted the requirements of the statutory duty requiring Local Authorities to secure sufficient play opportunities for children, as far as reasonably practicable, and the content of the latest Play Sufficiency Assessment.

The Chair wished all in attendance a Merry Christmas and a happy and healthy new year and the meeting closed at 5.48 p.m.

Approved as a correct record and subject to any amendments or corrections agreed and recorded in the minutes of the meeting held on 7th February 2023, they were signed by the Chair.

CHAIR