

SUBJECT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 1 - WEDNESDAY, 5 SEPTEMBER 2018

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE SUBJECT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 1
HELD IN COUNCIL CHAMBER - CIVIC OFFICES ANGEL STREET BRIDGEND CF31 4WB
ON WEDNESDAY, 5 SEPTEMBER 2018 AT 09:30**

Present

Councillor CA Webster – Chairperson

JPD Blundell	NA Burnett	SK Dendy	DK Edwards
J Gebbie	DG Owen	RME Stirman	LM Walters
AJ Williams			

Apologies for Absence

B Sedgebeer and JE Williams

Officers:

Sarah Daniel	Democratic Services Officer - Scrutiny
Julie Ellams	Democratic Services Officer - Committees

Invitees:

Philip Beaman	Green Spaces and Bereavement Services Manager
Andrew Hobbs	Group Manager - Street Works
Zak Shell	Head of Neighbourhood Services
Mark Shephard	Corporate Director - Communities
Councillor Richard Young	Cabinet Member Communities

28. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Walters declared a personal interest in agenda item 5, Playing Fields, Outdoor Sports Facilities and Parks Pavilions because her husband was a member of Bridgend Municipal Bowling Club.

29. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of meetings of the Subject Overview and Scrutiny Committees dated 16th April 2018 and 24th May 2018 be approved as a true and accurate record.

30. FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME UPDATE

The Scrutiny Officer presented a report on the forward work programme, potential items for comment and prioritisation and feedback from previous meetings.

At the 13 May 2018 meeting, Secure Estate was considered and members asked what percentage of the prison population in Parc previously resided in BCBC before they became an ordinary resident of BCBC as a result of being in the secure estate. The feedback stated that the prison did not collect data in this way. A Member added that the Ministry of Justice should be able to provide this data.

The Chair of the Committee confirmed that she had sent a letter to the Department of Justice and Welsh Government stating that they should reconsider the Grant funding

allocation as BCBC was being placed in an unfair financial disadvantage by having a secure estate within its boundary.

The Committee noted that Education Outcomes had been prioritised for January 2019.

The Committee asked that the same invitees for Education Outcomes be invited to ALN Reform in addition to a representative dealing with apprenticeships.

RESOLVED: That Committee approved the feedback from the previous meetings and identified the invitees for future items.

31. **PLAYING FIELDS, OUTDOOR SPORTS FACILITIES AND PARKS PAVILIONS**

The Corporate Director Communities presented a report bringing to the attention of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee proposals to make the Council's provision of playing fields, outdoor sports facilities and parks pavilions more financially sustainable moving forward. The report would be presented to Cabinet on 18 September 2018 seeking permission to enter into a period of consultation.

The Corporate Director Communities explained that in view of the budget cuts, they were looking to move towards a scenario of full cost recovery with regard to the provision of playing fields, and parks pavilions. This was a direction of travel consistent with other authorities such as the Vale of Glamorgan, Carmarthen and Blaenau Gwent. The cumulative impact of substantial budget reductions had been felt by the Council and the current level of Council subsidy for this service was not sustainable. If no action was taken then ultimately the Council would have no option but to close the facilities.

The Corporate Director Communities explained that the council hoped the change of policy would prompt sports clubs and other users to take responsibility for the facilities through community asset transfers. The current level of council subsidy (up to 80%) had acted as a disincentive to clubs taking on community asset transfers. There were currently MTFs proposals for savings in 2019/20 and 2020/21 totalling £500,000. He added that following seven years of budget cuts, there were very few places in the Communities Directorate where further savings could be made.

Members raised concerns about the financial pressures on younger people participating in sport and how the authority would remain in compliance with the Social Services and Well-being Act. Members asked how the neighbouring Authority of Rhondda Cynon Taff were able to continue to subsidise such services. The Corporate Director Communities explained that the fees charges by authorities such as Rhondda Cynon Taff were the exception and that it was a political decision by them to prioritise certain services over others. This authority was seeking a culture change where people would be given the opportunity and timescales to find solutions. He recognised there were a number of issues and one size did not fit all. Some schools offered outdoor sports facilities for training and there could be opportunities for clubs to negotiate with the schools to use these.

Members were concerned that the current process of managing outdoor sports facilities was too fragmented as they were currently managed by different directorates and departments. Members asked if the Health Board had a role to play and if funding was available from this source. The Corporate Director Communities explained that he had many conversations with the health board over the years and even though more money was going in to prevention, it was not in this area. Members recommended that all Directorates work more holistically and adopt a One Council approach to enable them to access all available funding streams.

A Member raised concerns that in his experience, clubs were supported by volunteers with limited background in finance. The process was extremely complex and it was difficult to get details of running costs etc. Members were concerned at the complexity of the CAT process and recommended that the role of the CAT Officer be developed to include providing organisations greater support during the application and transfer process.

A Member asked how the list of sports facilities had been compiled and why some had been excluded including the 4G pitches recently built as part of the 21st centuries schools programme. The Corporate Director Communities explained that the list included pitches directly managed by BCBC but not those controlled by schools or the Community Councils or those run on a 'dual use' basis. The 'dual use' schools 4G pitches were run by the Social Services and Wellbeing Directorate and where made available to sports clubs and organisations, they were not as heavily subsidised with the charges reflective of the cost and maintenance of the facility. The 4G pitches were not suitable for the CAT process because they were used by numerous clubs and were not directly linked to the sole use of a single user club or a small number of clubs and organisations. Difficulties have been encountered where the CAT process has been reliant on bringing together multiple users, who frequently are unable to agree amongst themselves how best to proceed.

Members were disappointed that the decision to proceed with the consultation on the fees for Playing Fields, Outdoor Sports Facilities and Parks Pavilions to prompt a greater uptake in Community Asset Transfers had already been made. Scrutiny Members stated that this proposal should have come to Scrutiny sooner and with greater detail on the forthcoming proposals in the consultation. Members were concerned that a whole council approach was missing and that they were being asked to scrutinise a rationale which was incomplete. The Cabinet Member for Communities stated that this was the earliest opportunity to report this matter to the overview and scrutiny committee prior to it being reported to Cabinet later in the month. All Cabinet were being asked at this stage was to approve a consultation exercise to inform any future decisions. However, it was clear that some significant change was required in order to sustain the current level of provision as the Council could no longer afford to continue to manage and maintain them all on the same basis.

Members requested further information on how the consultation exercise would be promoted. The Corporate Director communities explained that all users, Town and Community Councils and other interested parties would be consulted. He was expecting a large number of responses and challenges.

Members raised concerns about the lack of background information on each site and the lack of an explanation on how it could work for individual organisations. The Corporate Director Communities assured the Chair that detailed information was held on each site. The consultation was seeking the views of the facilities users on how the facilities could be sustainable run moving forward. If the consultation was delayed the cuts would be upon the Directorate and it would not be able to complete the consultation process in time to achieve the Council's proposed savings and the clubs would be left with very little time to develop alternative plans in the event that Cabinet did ultimately agree to significantly change the nature of charges for these facilities. Significant changes had to be made before April 2020 in order to find and agree proposals that would make the necessary £ 500,000 savings. The Cabinet Member for Communities added that the report did not go into detail because the consultation was a fact finding exercise and following that a detailed analysis would be undertaken on the implications.

A Member referred to the potential use of secondary school pitches and recommended the Authority engage with schools under the Wellbeing and Future Generations Act to encourage the use of Playing Fields, Outdoor Sports Facilities and Parks Pavilions as there was a fear amongst members that if they were not used they could potentially close due to lack of interest and investment.

Members recommended engaging with third sector organisations such as BAVO, Play Wales, Disability Sport Wales, Chwarae Teg including bodies representing minority groups to encourage development and growth and encourage the use of facilities by all members of the public.

Members raised concerns that the contract for the CAT officer was due to expire at the end of October 2018. The Corporate Director Communities explained that any business case to extend the contract was dependent on there being more CAT transfers. This would therefore have to be linked to the approval by Cabinet of a move towards a new charging policy to encourage more clubs and facility users to engage with the CAT process.

A Member asked if it would be possible to suspend current CAT applications in order to keep council assets together. Members were concerned about the fragmentation of the management of the facilities and the potential loss of control the authority faced if the facilities were transferred under the Community Asset Transfer Scheme. Members therefore recommended that the Authority explore the possibility of a charitable organisation being established to manage the Playing Fields, Outdoor Sports Facilities and Parks Pavilions so they were managed under one organisation, similar to the Awen model. The Corporate Director Communities explained that other options had already been considered and investigated over the years and this was considered the best option to preserve the current portfolio but at the same time potentially make the necessary financial savings. Other options might come to light during the consultation and of course these would be considered.

A Member asked if it was possible for a school to undertake a Community Asset Transfer. The officers agreed to look into it and report back to Committee.

Members raised concerns that Subject Overview and Scrutiny Committee 3 had looked at the CAT Process in January 2018 and were due to look at it again in October 2018. The same points were being raised and discussed and better use could have been made of both Members and officers time. The Cabinet Member for Communities reminded members of the committee that scrutiny chairs had specifically requested that this matter be reported to this committee.

Members stressed the importance of the Welsh Rugby Union and the Football Association getting involved in future plans. A Member suggested that those bodies, Sport Wales, representative from disability sport and under-represented groups be included in the consultation process.

Conclusions

Members were disappointed that the decision to proceed with the consultation of the fees of Playing Fields, Outdoor Sports Facilities and Parks Pavilions to prompt a greater uptake in Community Asset Transfers had already been made. Scrutiny Members stated that this should have come to Scrutiny sooner and with greater detail on the forthcoming proposals in the consultation.

Members were concerned that the current process of managing outdoor sports facilities was too fragmented as they were currently managed by different directorates and

departments. Members recommended that all Directorates work more holistically and adopt a One Council approach to enable them to access all available funding streams.

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Members recommended engaging with third sector organisations such as BAVO, Play Wales, Disability Sport Wales, Chwarae Teg including bodies representing minority groups to encourage development and growth and encourage the use of facilities by all members of the public.

Members recommended the Authority engage with schools under the Wellbeing and Future Generations Act to encourage the use of Playing Fields, Outdoor Sports Facilities and Parks Pavilions as there was a fear amongst members if they were not used they could potentially close due to lack of interest and investment.

Members were concerned at the complexity of the CAT process and recommended that the role of the CAT Officer be developed to include providing organisations greater support during the application and transfer process.

Further Information

Members asked if it is possible that a school could undertake a Community Asset Transfer

32. URGENT ITEMS

None.

The meeting closed at 12:15