

SUBJECT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 3 - MONDAY, 26 SEPTEMBER 2022

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE SUBJECT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 3
HELD HYBRID IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER, CIVIC OFFICES, ANGEL STREET, BRIDGEND
ON MONDAY, 26 SEPTEMBER 2022 AT 16:00**

Present

Councillor P Davies – Chairperson

S J Bletsoe	N Clarke	C Davies	P W Jenkins
W J Kendall	J E Pratt	G Walter	I Williams
MJ Williams			

Apologies for Absence

M J Evans and MJ Kearn

Officers:

Lucy Beard	Scrutiny Officer
Richard Hughes	Chief Executive, Awen Trust
Lisa Jones	Regeneration Funding and Regional Engagement Team Leader
Rachel Keepins	Democratic Services Manager
Janine Nightingale	Corporate Director - Communities
Jonathan Parsons	Group Manager Development
Ieuan Sherwood	Economy and Natural Resources Manager
Delyth Webb	Group Manager - Strategic Regeneration

7. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Norah Clarke – Prejudicial interest declared as former volunteer with Credu Charity.

Councillor Colin Davies – Personal interest declared as involved in SPF bid in Vale.

Councillor Ian Williams – Personal interest declared as Bridgend Town Councillor, should regeneration and funding of the town be discussed.

8. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Councillor Norah Clarke advised - point 5b in the Minutes dated 18th July 2022 that PRIF stands for Porthcawl Resort Investment Focus, not Forecast.

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of a meeting of the Subject Overview and Scrutiny Committee 3 dated 16 February 2022 and 18 July 2022 be approved as a true and accurate record.

9. THE UNITED KINGDOM SHARED PROSPERITY FUND

The Corporate Director - Communities introduced the report on the United Kingdom Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) which was the UK Government replacement for the European Structural Investment Fund (ESIF), following the withdrawal of the UK from the European Union (EU) on 31 Jan 2020. She advised that Bridgend's allocation to date was £23 million which had to be spent over three years and was around half of what they were used to receiving from the EU, so it had been a challenge putting the investment plan together. It was important for the Committee to understand that it was for initiatives across the County, they had worked with the third sector and colleges to put the plan together and should have a decision on the investment plan by mid-October.

The Group Manager, Economy, Natural Resources and Sustainability advised the purpose of the report was to provide an update on their work on the UK Shared Prosperity Fund and an overview in Appendix one of the proposals that may go forward. He advised that alongside the People in Skills priority there was a dedicated resource specifically for a UK wide intervention called Multiply, to improve adult numeracy skills within the region.

He explained that local authorities had been invited to collaborate and feed into one overall local investment plan for the area. As part of the agreement, it had been agreed that Rhondda Cynon Taff would assume the role of the lead local authority for the region, so the UK Government would have one funding agreement direct to Rhondda Cynon Taff County Borough Council and they would have back-to-back agreements with each of the other authorities in the region. There was flexibility as to how it was delivered within Guidance from UK Government, with options for grant funding for procurement, commissioning and in house provision.

He advised whilst they as an Authority were not required to develop their own investment plan, it was important to develop the information in Appendix one which set out their priorities and the best deployment of the Shared Prosperity fund monies. He wished to stress to the Committee that the proposals had been developed in the absence of detailed fund guidance from UK Government and as such was subject to change particularly as some of the proposed activities, delivery models and funding values may vary. Looking at delivery Cabinet had agreed a two-tier governance structure, an economic partnership which would draw in multi-sector partners from across the County, within the region and Wales and an internal economic programme board. He explained that whilst they had an overall allocation of £23 million, £3.99M of that was specifically allocated to the Multiply Programme which left £19.1 million for what was considered as core shared prosperity fund activity under three themes. The UK Government suggested that funding was broken down to fixed annual yearly allocations which equated to roughly 12% in year one, 24% in year two and 64% in year three. The multiply allocations were different, in year one 30%, year two 35% and 35% in year three. There was no indication that funding could be rolled forward or that they were going to see multi-annual allocations, which was something they were lobbying hard on, as well as exploring mechanisms with other local authorities in the region and UK Government about how they could develop some flexibility around it.

He advised that 4% of the allocations could be used for administrative purposes. The current profile set out was inclusive of that 4% of Multiply and of an allocation from the Bridgend Shared Prosperity Fund for the delivery of projects by colleagues in Cardiff Capital Region, leaving in the region of £2.5 million over profile. In September, the Communities Directorate had submitted a growth pressure as part of the 2023-2027 MTFS process to try and meet that shortfall in funding to ensure all the activities could be delivered. If the programme remained overallocated, the responsibility for identifying those gaps would sit with their respective leads in each of the Departments. If not found, the funding available would only be the funding that is allocated as they could not exceed the available budgets. He concluded that the Recommendation of the report was for the Committee to note its contents along with Appendix one.

It was asked why the top slice of £330k going to the Cardiff City Region Deal (CCRD) had been agreed, what would Bridgend receive from this funding and why could it not be funded from the contributions the Authority and the nine other partner Authorities had already made.

Referring to the Appendix Members commented that whilst full of good intent it was light on detail e.g., it was not clear what the green or net zero market referred to involved. Lastly with regard to the two-tier governance, Members queried that there had been no

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mention of Town and Community Councils and asked what their role would be in governance and their ability to help with delivery.

The Corporate Director and the Group Manager, Economy, Natural Resources and Sustainability advised that there was a small element of £330k going to the CCR as a regional element of the Shared Prosperity Bid and there was recognition that whilst the fund was about local needs and delivery, there were some things better delivered regionally and across Local Authority boundaries. The CCR would look at filling some of the gaps, by bringing the amalgam of money together and having an impactful Regional Programme. The detail of every individual scheme could not be included in the report, and the appendices were an executive summary, however there were detailed cases behind them all. The intention was for a presentation to be made at the Town and Community Council Forum, asking Members of the Forum how best they see their Organisation's engagement suited in the delivery of the programme.

Members referred to the top slice if multiplied by 10 being a proportionate amount of money to deliver the deal, and in paragraph 8.2, Table 1 the percentage allocation was a regional allocation of 8.3%, but the Authority's contribution to the Cardiff Capital Region City Deal was 9.4166%, so asked the reason for the over 1% difference. They also queried why the percentage allocation for Bridgend was 8.3% of the regional allocation and the Administration Authority was receiving 16.2%.

The Corporate Director - Communities advised that the Shared Prosperity Fund was a UK Government Scheme and the CCR City Deal and their contribution were completely different things and not related. The allocation was what had been allocated by the UK Government.

Members requested more detail regarding Bridgend County Tourism event support and Bridgend local destination management and marketing.

Officers advised that the events fund that would be a resource to support event organisers to enhance and develop new events within the County Borough, as well as enhancing existing activities also to bring and attract new ones. It was clarified that the destination management side was in relation to the marketing, PR and promotion of the destination as well as opportunities to work across different businesses to develop products and packages. A revised Destination Management Plan would shortly be reported to Cabinet for consideration.

Members asked on what basis the Authority was getting 8.3% of the regional allocation, who had made the decision and who had put the case forward. Expanding that if 9.4% was their percentage of the Cardiff Capital Regional Deal, 8.3% would be a poor return from the UK Government.

Officers explained the metrics used by UK Government in determining the allocation: 40% of the decision was based on per capita; 30% was used to use the same needs-based index as was used for the Community Renewal Fund, and; 30% was allocated using the Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation, to comprise the total allocation awarded.

Referring to page 26 of the report, Members asked what directly the fund was giving to Bridgend Town Centre as it had been identified as needing improvement.

The Group Manager, Economy, Natural Resources and Sustainability advised that at that point in time there was not a Ward by Ward breakdown of the money for two reasons: predominantly it was a revenue based fund, and; saving for the capital proposals, and all of which would take place across the county Team generally. While a

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demographic of how many businesses from the Town Centre had applied for the fund would be available, at that point it had not been allocated.

Members requested clarity on the basis and lineage of how things go through Rhondda Cynon Taff Authority as Lead Authority, from the point that the application is made, who the application is made to and the role of the administrating Authority.

Officers advised that a draft legal agreement from Rhondda Cynon Taff had been received which set out how the claims and reporting processes would work and where the accountability would sit. It was clarified that decisions on the allocation and the splits across the region were made by the UK Government first and then within the region, and the local authorities themselves agreed who would be the Lead Authority.

Members asked how confident they could be that they could deliver £23 million in two and half to three years with such a very varied program.

The Corporate Director – Communities responded that it would be very challenging as the £23M would be split into years 1,2 and 3, a decision would not be received until October and the required percentage would need to be spent by next April. While currently they did not have the resources in the Directorate, options were being explored in terms of moving Officers from some activity onto this, to ensure every resource is maximised. Where they had continuity in revenue there was confidence but where there was new revenue and capital there would be challenges, however Officers were dedicated to making it work and if there was a shift from fixed annual allocation to multi annual allocation this key point could make a difference.

Following consideration of the report, the Committee made the following recommendations:

1. That concern is expressed over the risks involved of both insufficient funds to complete the project in addition to achieving the project proposals within the allocated time.
2. That further concern is expressed regarding the lack of resources and expertise within the Directorate and its ability to cope with the additional work associated with the project. Members did not agree that it was appropriate to transfer staff from other roles and projects as this would be counterproductive. The Committee also noted that the landscape for Local Authorities applying for funding is changing with timescales being very limited and criteria issued at a late stage in the process, meaning the Authority has a narrow timeframe to develop and formalise substantial bids. The Committee therefore recommended that priority needs to be given to resources within the Communities directorate to ensure that not only is it able to successfully take forward this project, but to ensure that the infrastructures are in place to enable the Authority to be best placed to apply and make the most of any future funding opportunities. As well as a strategic plan being developed, Members recommend that potential projects underneath this be drafted so that when the opportunity arises, they already have the basis for the application.
3. That strong concerns are expressed over the poor return that Bridgend County Borough had received in their allocation from the Shared Prosperity Fund (SPF) and the unfairness around the funding mechanism behind this.

The Committee therefore agreed to write directly to those within the UK Government responsible for the SPF to highlight the issues including:

- a. The fact that the allocation does not take into account that Bridgend is one of the fastest growing areas in Wales;
- b. The limited time the Authority has had to both put together proposals and then to utilise the fund and achieve its aims, is unreasonable and potentially puts the project and public funds at risk.

The Committee requested that this letter be copied to both local MPs; Dr Jamie Wallis and Chris Elmore.

The Committee requested:

1. A copy of any presentation made to the Town and Community Council Forum on Bridgend's Local Investment Plan proposals.
2. Further information on how claims will be processed by RCT as the Lead Authority as well as detail on the reporting and accountability process.
3. Further detail on the project proposals when available including breakdowns of the funding within each proposal.
4. Clarification as to whether there would be clawback on the funds should the outputs as set out in the proposals, not be achieved.

10. LEVELLING UP FUND PRIORITY PROJECTS

The Corporate Director - Communities introduced the report and explained the fund was the second half of the UK Government's Levelling Up Agenda which had been announced in the UK Government's spending review in 2020. It was a programme of mostly capital works with some revenue up to 2025, with an allocation of £4 billion overall across the UK, with £800 million for Wales. She advised each local authority could put in a bid for up to £20 million for each of their MP constituencies, with BCBC having two; Bridgend and Ogmore. Secondly a major transport bid for up to £50 million could be submitted. It was a capital fund which had some very specific criteria, such as supporting cultural assets, town centre and town and community regeneration and transport. She advised that bids submitted had to be 10% match funded, so money would need to be secured from either a third party, National Lottery funding or Bridgend County Borough Council itself. Two bids had been submitted one for the refurbishment of the Grand Pavilion in Porthcawl and one for the Penprysg Road Bridge in Pencoed to remove the level crossing and put in a new road bridge and footpath.

The Group Manager, Economy, Natural Resources and Sustainability presented an overview of the report, following which Members discussed the following:

Members queried whether £20M would be sufficient for the Grand Pavilion refurbishment project, taking into consideration rising prices and if not, where extra money needed could come from, and also whether Cadw were on board and accepting of the proposed alterations.

Officers advised that when opening up old buildings sometimes other unforeseen issues could become apparent, however lessons had been learned from previous schemes, and it was recognised that this scheme had a significant large contingency in it and a risk contingency against it. If there were unforeseen circumstances or costs rose, there would be a need to relook at the design and re-engineer accordingly, as there were not additional monies to spend on the building. Through value engineering they would look

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at the building and what elements they could do in latter phases should more money become available. The Group Manager Strategic Regeneration advised that that Cadw were familiar with the building and were on board along with the Authority's own internal Conservation and Design Team.

Members expressed concern that if the project went ahead the Grand Pavilion would be potentially closed for up to two years and asked whether options were being explored to retain some stability for events to be provided in Porthcawl.

Officers advised once construction commenced on the building it was subject to the contractors' risk and liability insurance, so although it had been considered it was not possible to allow the use of the building during that time. However, they would work with Awen who operate the facility regarding facilities in other places.

The Chief Executive of the Awen Cultural Trust explained that their priority would always be the local users and they would work with colleagues at the Council to try and see what they do, with a possible combination of working with schools and other institutions to see what they can do to support and keep the arts going at a community level as well.

Members enquired if in terms of allocated funding for the Pavilion whether there was any scope to do some feasibility work around a temporary building somewhere in Porthcawl, e.g., Rest Bay playing field was suggested or renting a field or possibly using a car park depending on what it would be used for in the regeneration. There was interest in seeing any report or outcomes, if those discussions had taken place, as Members felt money could still be made while the Pavilion project was taking place and suggested alternative forms could also possibly be explored such as the community benefit aspect of the procurement contract and a Section 106 Agreement.

The Corporate Director - Communities and the Cabinet Member for Regeneration advised there had been conversations regarding exploring venues but unfortunately, they could not use money from the Levelling Up fund for a feasibility at that stage, as all the money had to be spent on the project and they had put a spend profile in.

Members inquired whether the anticipated number of seats would increase once the Pavilion project was completed and had there been any consideration to provide extra parking facilities on site or close to site. If not was that something that could be taken away and brought back for the Committee to look at.

The Corporate Director- Communities advised there were no plans to increase the amount of parking on site, but she did not believe they were removing the existing onsite parking. She explained they had commissioned a parking study for Porthcawl which was an important part of the regeneration.

Members asked for clarification on the one bid per MP's area and when the next funding transit would be. They were also aware that Maesteg Town Hall had a few complications meaning an increase in costs and time scales, so wondered if there would be a time period when neither of them was available, or whether subject to the bid being successful, the Grand Pavilion would not close until Maesteg Town Hall was reopened.

The Corporate Director explained the work had to be completed by April 2025, so assumed the next round would start then but would probably open in the next couple of years to be able to process beforehand. The Corporate Director - Communities and the Chief Executive of Awen Cultural Trust clarified that Maesteg Town Hall would open before the Grand Pavilion closed as if they were successful, they would still have to finish designs, submit any planning permission, go to tender, select a contractor, and get them onto site.

The Corporate Director - Communities and the Group Manager for Planning and Development Services outlined the bid for the Penprysg Road Bridge, explaining they had submitted to the Levelling Up Fund for at least £25 million to put the bridge in place. There were initial designs for the bridge, and they had started going through the Welsh Transport Appraisal Guidance (WelTAG) Process as well as some public consultation. It was a complex scheme as they would be taking away an old Victorian era infrastructure, replacing it with a modern bridge and taking away the existing overbridge at the railway station end of Pencoed, then replacing that with a fully accessible, active travel and pedestrian bridge.

Members expressed concern over whether £25 million would be sufficient for the project, whether it would be completed by 2025 and there being no option to scale back due the nature of the project. They also asked if there were any other sources of funding that could be explored.

The Corporate Director - Communities advised that in exceptional circumstances they would allow a transport bid to go into 2026. She advised that the costs could be more than the maximum bid but they did not have the full and costed design and there were attributes that could affect the amount of funding needed. She advised it was a complex project and there were a lot of unknowns at that time, but they would be heavily reliant on other partners and external agencies to play their part, as having the infrastructure in place would have a regional impact.

With regard to the regional element Members asked whether Welsh Government and Network Rail had been approached for funding support and while fully supportive of the project Members sought reassurance that when the level crossing was removed it would not cause a traffic problem through the lanes, specifically through Hendre and Coity.

Officers advised that with regard to the regional dimension Transport for Wales (TFW) and Network Rail had been involved with the steering group they had set up and were fully supportive but there was not any funding from them. To take the project forward, they had funding from Cardiff Capital Region (CCR). They did not know what was going to happen with CCR, Welsh Government and Transport funding but would be looking for funding programmes as they came forward. As the project developed and there was more certainty, the more opportunity they had of attracting additional funding through other means. With regard to assurances sought regarding traffic, before they looked at any future development proposals, they had to have an idea of what the impact would be, some of which would not be known until the new bridge was in place. However, it was something they were mindful of and recognised there was a separate piece of work that would need to be attached to this project.

Members asked whether a bid for the Ogmore constituency could be included in the next round of plans and funding.

The Corporate Director - Communities advised that over the last twelve months they had put together three different schemes for the Ogmore Constituency, but unfortunately the Levelling Up Fund Officers did not feel any of the three fitted the criteria. She wanted to clarify it was not through the lack of trying and that it had been very disappointing for the Team.

Members asked if it was a lesson learned that Bridgend County Borough Council needed to have a comprehensive strategic investment plan so that aspirations and projects were ready that may or may not fit when an opportunity arises, and whether that was being done.

The Corporate Director - Communities advised that it had been difficult as when the Levelling Up Fund was announced there had been no detailed criteria or guidance, they did not know the individuals involved and they were a new Team, so they had to base on other schemes they had done before. She advised that the Communities Directorate were outstanding at writing funding bids, so it had not been through lack of writing them, but the due to the lack of criteria available. She referred to the 2030 Strategy and the Economic Development Strategy reported to Council in March, which contained a significant number of projects, so they knew what the projects were and would like to take the schemes one step forward and have them ready, but unfortunately the Team were currently busy delivering what was in front of them. However, she would like to think they would hopefully be in a better place in the future.

Following consideration of the report, the Committee made the following recommendations:

1. Similarly, to the discussions around the SPF, concern is again expressed over the tight timescales surrounding the applications for the Levelling Up Fund as well as the timescales to complete the projects, particularly if there was no extension allowed. The Penprysg Railway Bridge was particularly at risk due to the level of work that this would involve to complete.
2. That they strongly supported the work around alternative or temporary arrangements and locations during the interim period of the Grand Pavilion in Porthcawl being closed. Particular emphasis, however, was placed on making sure Porthcawl would not lose footfall and revenue. Members requested feedback on these plans and mitigating measures when available but furthermore recommended that as part of this work, a feasibility study be undertaken on the potential for a temporary facility being put in place in Porthcawl whilst the Pavilion is closed. The proposal was made to explore the option of utilising the Section 106 aspect of the development contract in relation to mitigate the impact of the building closure on the community.

The Committee requested:

1. The timeframe for the completion of the Maesteg Town Hall project. Concerns were raised about whether the Town Hall would be completed before the Grand Pavilion closed for redevelopment. Members also requested information on what this meant for Awen revenue.
2. Further information (including a possible feasibility study requested in the above recommendations) on any proposed temporary facility and alternative arrangements whilst the Pavilion is closed.

Concerns were expressed regarding the Penprysg Railway Bridge around funding, completion and the potential impact of heavy traffic in the area. The Committee requested a briefing paper once the project had been approved, illustrating the plans that were to be put in place to monitor and mitigate the impact of traffic on both sides of the proposed bridge. On the subject of parking in Porthcawl linked to redevelopment projects such as the Grand Pavilion and the aim to increase footfall in the area, the Committee were advised of a Parking study that was currently taking place in Porthcawl as part of its Regeneration and Placemaking plans. The Committee requested that they

be involved in the development of a Strategic Transport Plan for Porthcawl and that this be added to the Committee's FWP.

11. FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME UPDATE

Having considered the report the Forward Work Programme Update the Committee requested the following items be added to the FWP:

1. An update on Highway Maintenance.
2. Pedestrian safety in historic villages.

Taxi Licensing

The Committee:

- expressed concern that taxis are only permitted to use the one DVSA accredited MOT station appointed by BCBC and that if the vehicle fails, the fixing work cannot be done there so the vehicle has to be booked in to another garage to get the fixing work completed, then rebooked in to the permitted MOT station for an additional fee and a further test, which can result in taxi's being off the road for longer, higher costs and a significant loss of earnings. The garage is also very busy with testing of South Wales Police and BCBC vehicles.
- referred to other Local Authorities, e.g. Cardiff allowing the use of any DVSA accredited MOT station which makes things easier for operators and fairer for all DVSA registered MOT stations.
- expressed concern about the potential further impact this may be having locally regarding the shortness of availability of taxis in the County Borough generally and particularly later at night.
- queried how performance / reliability of taxi's was monitored through licence renewals or otherwise and how the Authority reviews cancellations, late night cancellations, availability after hours and what is being done to enable improvement and a reliable taxi fleet.
- referred the topic to the Licensing Committee for consideration and action.

Porthcawl Regeneration Report

The Committee discussed the forthcoming report on Porthcawl Regeneration scheduled for the Subject Overview and Scrutiny Committee 3 on 20 February 2023 and requested that the background to the Cosy Corner project be included in the scope of the report.

The Committee requested that representatives of the following organisations be invited to attend for the scrutiny of the report:

- Visit Wales
- Credu Charity Limited, formerly the Community Interest Company, Porthcawl Harbourside

RESOLVED: That the Committee approved the Forward Work Programme in Appendix A, subject to the above additions and requests, noted that the Forward Work Programme and any updates from the Committee would be reported to the next meeting of Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee and noted the Recommendations Monitoring Action Sheet in Appendix B.

12. URGENT ITEMS

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None

The meeting closed at Time Not Specified