

COMMUNITY, ENVIRONMENT AND LEISURE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - THURSDAY, 26 JANUARY 2017

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE COMMUNITY, ENVIRONMENT AND LEISURE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE HELD IN COMMITTEE ROOMS 2/3, CIVIC OFFICES ANGEL STREET BRIDGEND CF31 4WB ON THURSDAY, 26 JANUARY 2017 AT 2.00 PM

Present

Councillor JC Spanswick – Chairperson

CA Green
M Thomas

CJ James
JH Tildesley MBE

JR McCarthy
R Williams

G Phillips

Officers:

Sarah Daniel	Democratic Services Officer - Committees
Alan Morgan	Chairman of Board of Trustees of Awen Trust
Andrew Rees	Senior Democratic Services Officer - Committees
Zak Shell	Head of Neighbourhood Services
Andrew Thomas	Group Manager Sports & Physical Activity

80. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from the following Members:

Councillor CL Jones
Councillor C Reeves

81. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The following declarations of interest were made:

Councillor J McCarthy declared a personal interest in agenda item – 5 Cultural Partnership – Awen Cultural Trust as a Trustee appointed by the Council of the Awen Cultural Trust.

Councillor JH Tildesey MBE declared a personal interest in agenda item – 5 Cultural Partnership – Awen Cultural Trust as a Trustee appointed by the Council of the Awen Cultural Trust.

82. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting of the Community Environment and Leisure Overview and Scrutiny Committee of 19 December 2016 be approved as a true and accurate record.

83. FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME UPDATE

The Scrutiny Officer presented a report which detailed the items to be considered and the invitees to attend the next meeting of the Committee on 6 April 2017.

Conclusions

The Committee noted the items to be considered at its meeting on 6 April 2017.

The Committee discussed the Forward Work Programme and agreed to receive a report on MREC in place of the Rhiw Gateway item at the April meeting if there was more information to report to the Committee at this time. If no further information could be reported to the Committee on MREC, the Committee would receive reports on the Rhiw Gateway and Highways Update.

The Committee also requested that an invitation be sent to Kevin Mulcahy for the Highways Update so any technical questions that arise could be answered at the meeting. The Committee asked that the report request for Highways include the following information:

- Highways Staffing Structure and how they operate
- Repairs to Highways and how they are prioritised including information on waiting times for repairs
- How the service will look in the future for Autumn/ Winter Maintenance, Street Cleaning.

Findings and outcomes to the recent consultant report on the Highway section and the actions/ responses to this

84. CULTURAL PARTNERSHIP - AWEN CULTURAL TRUST

The Scrutiny Officer introduced the performance and progress report of the Council's partnership with Awen Cultural Trust. She informed the Committee that from 1 April 2017 responsibility for the Cultural Partnership would move from the Communities Directorate to the Social Services and Wellbeing Directorate.

The Head of Neighbourhood Services reported on an update on the performance and progress of the Council's partnership with Awen Cultural Trust since it was established to manage a range of cultural services and facilities on behalf of the Council, with effect from October 2015. He informed the Committee that the previous report it had received on 23 March 2016 had set out the progress made by the Trust in the first five months since its establishment and the process for the appointments to the Board, of which the Council has 20% representation. He stated that the Partnership Agreement is the key document that governs the relationship between the Council and the Trust. In addition, it has an outcome framework where the Council has a clear role in reviewing and scrutinising the partnership with Awen to reflect the priorities of the Council and to direct the Trust towards issues of importance in terms of cultural provision. He informed the Committee that the main priorities for the Trust are agreed in the annual service plan which is presented to Council for approval. The Head of Neighbourhood Services commented that the performance of libraries in Bridgend is in the top quartile in a number of performance indicators. He stated that the Council had worked with the Trust to achieve £250k savings in the MTFS for 2016/17 while keeping open all facilities and ensuring services are accessible and affordable.

The Committee questioned the timescale for the review of the outcome framework. The Chief Executive of the Trust confirmed that the outcome framework can be reviewed in order to assess the Council's needs and changes it requires. He stated that it was very much in the Council's gift to review the outcome framework. Oversight of the Trust will pass from the Communities Directorate to the Social Services and Wellbeing Directorate with effect from April 2017, which would involve a period of transition. The Group Manager Sports and Physical Activity informed the Committee that the transfer of client responsibility will bring the challenge to make leisure more accessible and to develop apprenticeships. It was also important to identify links to the priorities identified in the Corporate Plan of supporting a successful economy and the smarter use of resources.

The Committee questioned how events are publicised. The Chief Executive of the Trust informed the Committee that the transfer of services previously managed by the Council to the Trust had enabled a more agile approach to be adopted in the marketing of events through the increased use of social media. He stated that some events during half term at Bryngarw County Park had been marketed freely and exclusively on social media. There had been a significant use of social media which had led the service being more responsive to the needs of its customers. Videos of the products on offer by Wood B had been put on social media which attracted 10k views. He stated that internet sales of products were being considered. The Committee questioned whether it was possible to measure whether people attending the events were first time visitors to facilities. The Chief Executive of the Trust informed the Committee that the new ICT system will help to interrogate data of whether people are first time visitors. The Trust would also use reviews on Trip Advisor to establish whether those attending events are first time visitors.

The Committee referred to the 97% customer satisfaction rate of the library service and questioned how this analysis had been done and was there evidence of usage of libraries by population demographics. The Chief Executive of the Trust informed the Committee that the CIPFA Plus survey is used to calculate customer satisfaction. This data was captured by the various libraries and was fed into the survey. The Chief Executive of the Trust informed the Committee that library usage tends to drop when young people get into their teenage years and also in 25 to 40 years age group.

The Committee requested an update on progress of the redevelopment of Maesteg Town Hall as a cultural hub. The Chief Executive of the Trust informed the Committee that the trust was extremely pleased with the programme of events delivered at the Town Hall and the numbers attending those events. He stated that work was being undertaken with the Council in an attempt to bring the redevelopment of the Town Hall forward as a cultural hub so that it could have a transformative effect in the Llynfi Valley.

The Committee referred to the £101k savings proposed to be delivered in the MTFs in 2017/18 and questioned whether it was possible to raise more income. The Chief Executive of the Trust informed the Committee that the £101k savings was a combination of both savings and income generation, there would also be a focus on efficiency. He stated that the Trust would be introducing a 5 year Business Plan which focused on energy and LED technology at library facilities. He also informed the Committee that the creation of the trust had enabled greater opportunities for income generation and better procurement than operating within the constraints of the Council and staff would also be incentivised in the delivery of services.

The Committee expressed concern that price increases had been levied for fitness classes and community groups using leisure facilities. The Chief Executive of the Trust informed the Committee that the Trust did not plan to increase prices for community groups using facilities. The Trust liaises with users and Town Councils on fees and charges. He stated that most of what the Trust does is managing one off events and this year a pantomime had been staged at Maesteg Town Hall attended by a total of 2,000 people. The Group Manager Sports and Physical Activity informed the Committee that under the contract with Halo, the Council had put in place protected prices for swimming and court hire. He stated that the customers were incentivised to purchase membership packages for gym and fitness classes which were at more preferential rates than individual hire. He also stated that the promotion of equal access to leisure facilities to all members of the community is a theme in the Council's Strategic Equality Plan.

The Committee requested details of the staffing structure of Awen. The Chief Executive of the Trust informed the Committee that the Trust has 160 individual employees amounting to c. 85 Full Time Equivalent posts. A new Development Manager had been appointed to oversee Wood B and B Leaf. It was planned to create a more stable salary base with less reliance placed on casual contracts. He stated that most staff are paid above the living wage. He also stated that a partnership approach would soon be underway with Bridgend Town Council to promote and develop Carnegie House as a venue. He informed the Committee that the staffing structure is constantly reviewed to ensure it was fit for purpose and delivering against the business plan. The Committee questioned whether targets were set for staff. The Chief Executive of the Trust confirmed that reports are made against a number of areas based on a balanced scorecard which he undertook to report to the Committee once Quarter 3 had been completed.

The Committee requested an explanation of the introduction of the HYNT scheme. The Chief Executive of the Trust informed the Committee that the HYNT scheme had been introduced to provide carers with free tickets to enable disabled people to have support to access events. It was also planned to implement the Changing Places scheme where space allows which will create a fully accessible public conveniences. Work is currently underway at Pencoed Library. It was planned to create similar facilities at the Bryngarw Visitor Centre and the Grand Pavilion Porthcawl.

The Committee questioned whether there was a possibility of an allowance being paid to Wood B and B Leaf trainees in recognition of the work they carry out. The Committee also questioned the steps being taken to recruit more trainees to Wood B and B Leaf. The Chief Executive of the Trust informed the Committee that part of the role of the newly appointed Development Manager was to explore the possibility of paying an allowance to Wood B and B Leaf trainees. Part of the Development Manager's role was to put in place a pathway into work. He stated that the Development Manager had previous experience of working in a social enterprise and that he was working with a social enterprise training company to help people into jobs. He also stated that the payment of an allowance was a complex area as it could put at risk the payment of benefit. Steps were being taken to look at how to best reward the trainees within the constraints of the benefit system so that it did not compromise their package of care. The Chief Executive of the Trust explained that events were organised to recognise the contribution made by Wood B and B Leaf trainees by holding events e.g. hog roasts and barbecues and events at Christmas and Easter where family members can join trainees to celebrate their achievements. . The Committee considered that it should visit the facilities at Wood B and B Leaf.

The Committee questioned whether there are gaps in the provision of cultural events in the County Borough. The Chief Executive of the Trust informed the Committee that the Trust is aware of where the public come from to attend events at the Trust's venues. He stated there is currently a lack of provision in the Ogmore Valley; however plans to provide events there would be included in next year's Service Plan. The Group Manager Sports and Physical Activity informed the Committee commented on the responsiveness of Awen in making facilities at the play area of Bryngarw Country Park accessible when it had cut an A frame to allow access to the equipment for people with disabilities.

The Committee questioned the retail opportunities at Bryngarw Park. The Chief Executive of the Trust informed the Committee that there was currently no opportunities to purchase items at Bryngarw Park and the introduction of retail opportunities would lead to a better customer experience and an opportunity to showcase the work of Wood B and B Leaf.

The Committee asked what the challenges were in the future. The Chief Executive of the Trust informed the Committee that a great deal of work was being done behind the scenes supported by the Trustees. He stated there were robust governance arrangements in place. The Chairperson of the Trustees commented that the cultural trust is a long term partnership with the Council and that a considerable amount of effort had been put in place to recruit a wide and diverse Board of Trustees. He stated that the commitment of the Board had been unwavering and invaluable with the individual Board members bringing a great deal of added value from their own work experience. He commented on the good governance arrangements in place and the Board had good support from management and staff. He stated that the Trust was not about increasing prices but ensuring that it ran a successful business.

The Committee commented on the accountability arrangements within the Trust. The Chairperson of the Trustees commented that the Trustees fulfil the role of the Council and that when the Board members were recruited there was a recognition by the Council that the individuals appointed had the right skills and had accountability. In response to a question from the Committee on the gender split of the Board, the Chairperson of the Board of Trustees commented there are 8 males and 3 females on the Board of Trustees. The two Council nominations are, to an extent, outside of the control of the Trust.

The Chairperson thanked the invitees for their contribution.

Conclusions

The Committee welcomed the report on the Cultural Partnership and was pleased with the positive developments and outcomes that the Trust had made since they had been established in October 2015 to manage a range of cultural services and facilities on behalf of the Council.

The Committee agreed to keep the item on the Forward Work Programme and invite Awen back, no sooner than one year to discuss progress and plans for future developments that the invitees had discussed with Members which included the following:

- 5 Year business plan that was being introduced from 1 April 2017
- Energy Plan
- Planned use of LED Technology
- Review of Staffing Structure
- Growth Plan of newly appointed Development Manager which includes exploring the opportunity of paying an allowance for Wood B and B Leaf trainees
- Development of retail opportunities at Bryngarw Park

Further Information

The Committee requested to receive the Balance Scorecard from Awen Cultural Trust once Quarter 3 had been completed.

85. URGENT ITEMS

There were no urgent items.

The meeting closed at 3.50 pm