

**COUNTY BOROUGH OF BLAENAU GWENT**

**REPORT TO: THE CHAIR AND MEMBERS OF THE CORPORATE OVERVIEW SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

**SUBJECT: CORPORATE OVERVIEW SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - 12TH FEBRUARY, 2020**

**REPORT OF: DEMOCRATIC SUPPORT OFFICER**

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PRESENT: COUNCILLOR S. HEALY (CHAIR)

Councillors M. Cook  
M. Cross  
P. Edwards  
C. Meredith  
J. P. Morgan  
J. Wilkins

WITH: Corporate Director of Social Services  
Chief Officer – Commercial  
Chief Officer - Resources  
Head of Community Services  
Head of Governance & Partnerships  
Head of Exchequer  
Organisational Manager – HR  
Communications & Marketing Manager  
Service Manager, Policy & Partnerships  
Scrutiny & Democratic Officer / Advisor

Wales Audit Office  
Non Jenkins  
Charlotte Owen

ITEM	SUBJECT	ACTION
	<p><b><u>BEREAVEMENT</u></b></p> <p>As a mark of respect the Committee stood and observed a one minute silence for former Councillor David White.</p>	

<p><b>No. 1</b></p>	<p><b><u>SIMULTANEOUS TRANSLATION</u></b></p> <p>It was noted that no requests had been received for the simultaneous translation service.</p>	
<p><b>No. 2</b></p>	<p><b><u>APOLOGIES</u></b></p> <p>Apologies for absence were received from Councillors G. Paulsen, J. Hill, M. Moore, L. Parsons and D. Wilkshire.</p>	
<p><b>No. 3</b></p>	<p><b><u>DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS AND DISPENSATIONS</u></b></p> <p>There were no declarations of interest or dispensations reported.</p>	
<p><b>No. 4</b></p>	<p><b><u>SPECIAL CORPORATE OVERVIEW SCRUTINY COMMITTEE MINUTES</u></b></p> <p>The Minutes of the Corporate Overview Scrutiny Committee Meeting held on 19th November, 2019 were submitted.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED that the Minutes be accepted as a true record of proceedings.</p>	
<p><b>No. 5</b></p>	<p><b><u>ACTION SHEET - 5TH DECEMBER 2019</u></b></p> <p>The action sheet arising from the meeting of the Corporate Overview Scrutiny Committee held on 5th December, 2019 was submitted, whereupon:-</p> <p>Action Sheet – 26th September, 2019</p> <p>A Member requested that the information provided on the details of incidents, be updated with the latest information.</p> <p>Members raised serious concerns in relation to violence and aggression towards staff and requested that a Member Briefing Session be arranged to discuss the Health and Safety of staff and the measures that are in place to safeguard them.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED this course of action.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED, subject to the foregoing, that the action sheet be noted.</p>	

No. 6

**WALES AUDIT OFFICE REVIEW OF CORPORATE ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE SAFEGUARDING OF CHILDREN**

Consideration was given to the report of the Corporate Director of Social Services which presented the findings of the Wales Audit Office (WAO) follow up review of corporate arrangements for the safeguarding of children and the management response to the proposals for improvement.

The Corporate Director of Social Services presented the report and the WAO representative highlighted the main points contained therein.

The Director of Social Services reported that the All Wales Safeguarding procedures had been updated in November 2019 and therefore the Corporate Safeguarding Policy needed to be updated to ensure that staff with safeguarding responsibilities were kept updated and made aware of any issues within safeguarding. A Welsh Government training programme was due to be rolled out shortly and consideration would need to be given to what level of staff needed to undertake the training across all directorates. Third parties and stakeholders who delivered services on behalf of the Authority would also need to be included in the safeguarding training. The Director referred to the Management Response and the actions to take forward and referred to Recommendation R2, item 2 – development of options for Scrutiny Committees moving forward and felt that broadening the remit of the Joint Education & Learning and Social Services Safeguarding Scrutiny Committee to become a Corporate Safeguarding Scrutiny Committee was the best way forward.

A Member supported the Director's view and commented that safeguarding was an integral part of the Council and Members needed to collectively ensure that safeguarding arrangements were strengthened.

A Member enquired if the development of options for Scrutiny Committees moving forward would be considered at the Annual General Meeting in May 2020. The Head of Governance & Partnerships explained that changes to Committees would need to go through the AGM process, there was a constituted Joint Education & Learning and Social Services Scrutiny Committee already in place and this could be developed as a whole Joint Safeguarding Scrutiny Committee. This was referenced in the

Management Response actions to take forward.

The Committee AGREED to recommend, subject to the foregoing, that the report be accepted and endorse Option 2; namely that Members of the Corporate Overview Scrutiny Committee:

- Considered the WAO follow up review of corporate arrangements for the safeguarding of children and the management response and provide comment prior to it being submitted to the Executive Committee;
- Following approval by the Executive Committee the report would be presented to Audit Committee for assurance; and
- Receive a 6 monthly review of the progress of the management response as part of the Committee's Forward Work programme.

The WAO representatives left the meeting at this juncture.

**No. 7**

**COMMERCIAL STRATEGY 2020-2025**

Consideration was given to the report of the Chief Officer Commercial which presented the Blaenau Gwent Commercial Strategy for the period 2020-2025.

The Chief Officer Commercial spoke to the report and highlighted the main points contained therein.

The Chair said this was a positive report and the Commercial Strategy was a new venture for the Council going forward with an emphasis on value for money.

In response to a Member's question, the Chief Officer Commercial said that being a commercially minded Council helped to focus on the customer experience with greater visibility on what the Council purchased which helped the local economy.

A Member referred to insurance claims and damage to street furniture e.g. lamp posts etc. and enquired how these costs could be recovered and how Members could report such incidents. The Head of Community Services said that a programme had been introduced recently and a company had been engaged to pursue insurance claims regarding damage to street furniture and cost recovery. Contact details for reporting of such incidents would be

	<p>forwarded to Members for information.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED to recommend that the report be accepted and endorse Option 1; namely that the Commercial Strategy and associated work programme be supported prior to approval by Executive and Council.</p>	
<p><b>No. 8</b></p>	<p><b><u>CORPORATE COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY 2020-2025</u></b></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Communications and Marketing Manager which presented the Corporate Communications Strategy 2020–2025.</p> <p>The Chief Officer Commercial spoke to the report and highlighted the main points contained therein.</p> <p>A Member commented that the Council were promoting digital and social media communications, however, there was no mention of ‘My Council Services’ App in the report. The Chief Officer Commercial said My Council Services App was an important tool for reporting incidents and maintaining a flow of work and this needed to be referenced in the strategy. There were some issues with the service regarding feedback to customers and more work needed to be undertaken in this area. The Officer would pick up specific issues with Members as it was vital to have Members perspective on the service the public received.</p> <p>In relation to the social media campaign ‘Keeping up with the Joneses’, the Chief Officer Commercial commented that potentially an evaluation of this approach could be undertaken to look at what worked.</p> <p>The Communications and Marketing Manager informed Members that they would be working with Merthyr Council on a joint national ‘WRAP’ campaign over the next few months and would share this information with Members to gain their views.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED to recommend that the report be accepted and endorse Option 1, namely that the Communications Strategy and associated work programme be supported for approval by Executive and Council.</p>	
<p><b>No. 9</b></p>	<p><b><u>POSITION STATEMENT ON THE COUNCIL'S CCTV SYSTEM</u></b></p>	

Consideration was given to the report of the Chief Officer Resources (SIRO for CCTV) Head of Community Services and Head of Governance and Partnerships which was presented to provide a position statement on the Council's new overt CCTV system.

The Head of Governance & Partnerships spoke to the report and highlighted the main points contained therein which included that the Council now operated a 'record only' system.

In response to a Member's enquiry regarding the location of cameras, the Chief Officer Resources said that consultation had been undertaken with Gwent Police on camera locations with a focus on town centres based on evidence of crime and anti-social behaviour and locations would be reviewed annually. Cameras could be relocated if necessary and would need to have a Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA) in place to evidence that the camera was needed in relation to crime prevention and appropriate signage would also need to be visible.

A Member enquired regarding the timeframe for downloading data. The Service Manager, Policy & Partnerships explained that the new system used digital technology with new high definition cameras utilising wireless technology and, as yet, there had been no significant delays in downloading footage to accommodate police requests.

A Member enquired if plans were in place for Gwent Police to have direct access to download footage. The Chief Officer Resources said that discussion between the police and SRS partners was ongoing but no decision had yet been made.

In response to a Member's enquiry regarding the number of CCTV cameras, the Head of Governance & Partnerships clarified that currently there were 53 CCTV cameras installed throughout the county borough with four deployable cameras to use for crime hot spots. The original number of cameras agreed in the Council report in 2018 had been 32. The increase was due to on-site surveys and the pre-tender design process which identified technical restrictions associated with wireless transmission, site lines at specific locations and camera fields of view to ensure effective coverage.

A Member commented that CCTV helped identify crime and

disorder across the local areas as the images were of good quality. The Member requested that a Members briefing session be held for further updates and the police be invited to attend to highlight the number of prosecutions made.

The Head of Governance & Partnerships supported this view as it was important to have police involvement at the briefing session due to their work within the communities of Blaenau Gwent.

The Committee AGREED this course of action.

The Chief Officer Resources reaffirmed to Members that the police had been consulted regarding the location of the cameras and a review could be undertaken to check if locations were still appropriate or if some cameras needed to be relocated for better coverage to ensure communities are kept safe.

The Chair enquired if funding had been received from Gwent Police. The Chief Officer Resources said that no funding had been received as yet.

The Committee AGREED to recommend, subject to the foregoing, that the report be accepted and endorse Option 2, namely that Committee:

- Considered and provided comment on the position statement on the overt CCTV function;
- Included the draft Policy and Strategy Framework for CCTV on their forward work programme prior to it being presented to Executive for endorsement; and
- Receives the annual monitoring report.

**No. 10**

**PROGRESS REPORT CONTRACTS OVER £500K**

Consideration was given to the report of the Head of Community Services which was presented to provide Members with updated information on the progress of capital projects over £500,000 in cost, undertaken within the Authority and, where appropriate, seek the necessary approval required under the Contract Procedural Rules to additional expenditure incurred on a particular project.

The Head of Community Services spoke to the report and highlighted the main points contained therein.

	<p>In response to a Member's question regarding the challenge for compensation for the demolition of Abertillery Leisure Centre, the Head of Community Services said that this was currently in litigation and was being pursued. Evidence had been presented to the Council's Legal team and he hoped for the best possible resolution.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED to recommend that the report be accepted and endorse Option 2; namely that the information included within the report be accepted as presented.</p>	
<b>No. 11</b>	<p><b><u>FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME - 1ST APRIL 2020</u></b></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Chair of the Corporate Overview Scrutiny Committee.</p> <p>The Chair advised Members that the next meeting had been postponed until May.</p> <p>The Head of Governance &amp; Partnerships informed Members that an update on preparations for exiting the EU would only be reported if any progress had been made.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED, subject to the foregoing, that the report be accepted and endorse Option 1; namely that the Corporate Overview Scrutiny Committee Forward Work Programme for the meeting in May 2020 be approved.</p>	