

COUNTY BOROUGH OF BLAENAU GWENT

REPORT TO: THE CHAIR AND MEMBERS OF THE COMMUNITY SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

SUBJECT: COMMUNITY SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - 4TH MARCH, 2020

REPORT OF: DEMOCRATIC SUPPORT OFFICER

PRESENT: COUNCILLOR J. WILKINS (CHAIR)

Councillors C. Meredith (Vice-Chair)
M. Cook
L. Elias
S. Healy
W. Hodgins
J. Holt
H. McCarthy
J. P. Morgan
B. Summers
L. Winnett

**WITH: Chief Officer Commercial
The Team Manager - Leisure & Street Scene
Scrutiny & Democratic Officer/Advisor**

**AND: Members of the Working Group
Councillor P. Edwards
Councillor J.C. Morgan**

ITEM	SUBJECT	ACTION
No. 1	<u>SIMULTANEOUS TRANSLATION</u> It was noted that no requests had been received for the simultaneous translation service.	

<p>No. 2</p>	<p><u>APOLOGIES</u></p> <p>The following apologies for absence were received:-</p> <p>Councillor G. Paulsen Councillor T. Sharrem Councillor P. Baldwin</p>	
<p>No. 3</p>	<p><u>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND DISPENSATIONS</u></p> <p>Item No. 5 Service Review Councillor W. Hodgins</p> <p>The Member advised that he had received legal advice and although he was permitted to declare an interest in his capacity as a member of the Board he could remain in the meeting and take part in discussions.</p>	
<p>No. 4</p>	<p><u>COMMUNITY SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE MINUTES</u></p> <p>The Chair noted that these Minutes had been submitted in error and had been agreed at the last meeting.</p>	
<p>No. 5</p>	<p><u>SERVICE REVIEW</u></p> <p>Having regard to the views expressed by the Proper Officer regarding the public interest test, that on balance the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighed the public interest in disclosing the information and that the report should be exempt.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED that the public be excluded whilst this item of business is transacted as it is likely there would be a disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 14, Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act, 1972 (as amended).</p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Chief Officer Commercial.</p> <p>The Chief Officer Commercial gave a detailed overview of the report which had been presented in order for Members to scrutinise the findings from the Service Review. The Chief Officer Commercial outlined the key points in the report as follows:-</p>	

- Scope and Background
- Phase Two
- Future Options
- Observations, Risks and Opportunities
- New Strategic Partnership Board

In conclusion the Chief Officer Commercial referred Members to the options for consideration and advised that both options challenged the previous service delivery model. The Chief Officer noted that both options posed risks and opportunities for the Council.

The Chair thanked the Chief Officer for the detailed overview of the report and welcomed questions from Members.

A Member referred to the Community Asset Transfer (CAT) and pointed out that due to staff at the facility the Authority would be responsible for TUPE costs which would result in a significant strain on pensions. The Member added that this was not normal practice and asked if the cost would be picked up by the new service provider.

The Team Manager - Leisure & Street Scene advised that the CAT was different to Beaufort Theatre as staff was involved and therefore a TUPE would be required to the new organisation. The Team Manager added that the relevant discussions had been undertaken and a course of action had been agreed with CLT.

With regard to a question raised about the senior management restructure, it was informed that two senior officers had left their posts and following new structures put forward this reduction had occurred naturally as the individuals had left the organisation.

A Member referred to the proposed representation of the Board would include Senior Members and asked if this would be only Executive Members. In response, the Chief Officer Commercial advised that Political representation had not yet been agreed and open for discussion.

A Member raised concerns in relation to the restrictions placed on Elected Members who sit on certain outside bodies representing

the Council. It prevented Members discussing matters with colleagues or make their constituents aware. The Member proposed that all level Blaenau Gwent Councillors be considered for the Strategic Partnership Board and ensure there was a cross party representation.

This course of action was AGREED.

A Member noted that the Strategic Partnership Board would meet on an annual basis and Members concurred that the Board should meet quarterly. The Chief Officer Commercial agreed that this could be explored, however it was important that the Board did not get in the way of the business.

The course of action was AGREED.

Discussions ensued around the business plans and explanations were provided for the points noted in the report.

Concerns were raised around the financial aspect of the business plans and the Chief Officer Commercial advised that it was difficult to comment on previous actions, however the Chief Officer was of the opinion that the business plans presented were now robust. The plans were an indication that the organisation was strengthening and delivering the Council's requirements via the service specification.

At this juncture the Chair invited Councillor P. Edwards and J.C. Morgan to provide an overview of the Working Party Report and findings.

The Chair wished to extend thanks to the Members and Officers of the Working Group for their due diligence and commitment over the last 2 years. The Chair noted that the Working Group had visited a number of facilities inside and outside of the Borough in order to gain a better understanding of the facilities.

The Members of the Committee also echoed congratulations to the Members and Officers of the Working Group.

Councillor P. Edwards advised that the Working Group had been established in November 2018 and had been tasked to look at services provided as part of the Review. The Councillor outlined the report of the Working Group and informed Members of the

visits and discussions undertaken with a number of staff from facilities in Blaenau Gwent and outside.

Following the investigations of the Working Group a number of suggestions were taken on board and discussions after the conclusion of the Group highlighted that there was a number of positive steps taken.

Councillor J.C. Morgan reiterated the work undertaken and advised that he felt the Working Group had proved a worthwhile exercise.

It was further noted that the Service Review had been ongoing for 18 months and it was now important that it came to a conclusion for all involved. Councillor Edwards advised that there were now mechanisms in place for the Council to monitor performance to ensure business plans are being achieved. He felt that as Elected Members we should be ambassadors in promoting and supporting the organisation.

At this juncture the Chair invited further questions prior to consideration being given to the options.

A Member raised concerns on comments noted in Appendix 3 to the report which criticised Board Members and wished his disappointment to be noted to these remarks. The Member stated that he had raised concerns along with his colleague to CLT some time ago with regard to the financial matters. The Chief Officer Commercial advised that the comments had not been directed at individuals and it been in reference to the number of changes made to Board. There was now a need to strengthen Board Members to have the appropriate challenge. Members felt that these comments should be amended as they were unprofessional.

The Vice-Chair welcomed the reports and the critical challenge that the Working Group provided to the Service Review. He advised that robust governance would be essential going forward and felt that it was important that the Council was a critical friend.

The Chair thanked everyone for their comments and referred to the options for consideration.

The Committee AGREED, subject to the foregoing, that the report

which contained information relating to the financial/business affairs of persons other than the Authority be accepted and Option 2/Route B be approved.	
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