

COUNTY BOROUGH OF BLAENAU GWENT

REPORT TO: THE CHAIR AND MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL

**SUBJECT: REGENERATION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE –
9TH DECEMBER, 2019**

REPORT OF: DEMOCRATIC SUPPORT OFFICER

PRESENT: COUNCILLOR L. PARSONS (CHAIR)

Councillors J. Hill
G.A. Davies
G.L. Davies
M. Holland
J. Millard
J.C. Morgan
B. Willis

AND: Corporate Director Regeneration & Community
Services
Head of Regeneration
Service Manager Development & Estates
Team Manager Regeneration Opportunities
Team Manager Connected Communities
Residential Development Officer
Business Regeneration Manager
Scrutiny Officer

ITEM	SUBJECT	ACTION
No. 1	<u>SIMULTANEOUS TRANSLATION</u> It was noted that no requests had been received for the simultaneous translation service.	
No. 2	<u>APOLOGIES</u> Apologies for absence were received for Councillors M. Day, P. Edwards, M. Moore, K. Pritchard, M. Cross, H. McCarthy.	

<p>No. 3</p>	<p><u>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND DISPENSATIONS</u></p> <p>Councillor J.C. Morgan declared an interest in the following:</p> <p>Item No. 8 - Regeneration and Economic Development Six Month Performance</p>	
<p>No. 4</p>	<p><u>REGENERATION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE</u></p> <p>The minutes of the Regeneration Scrutiny Committee held on 14th November, 2019 were submitted.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED that the minutes be accepted as a true record of proceedings.</p>	
<p>No. 5</p>	<p><u>ACTION SHEET – 14TH NOVEMBER, 2019</u></p> <p>The action sheet arising from the meeting of the Regeneration Scrutiny Committee held on 14th November, 2019 was submitted, whereupon:-</p> <p><u><i>Action Sheet 23rd September, 2019 (Request for a Joint Committee – Leisure Services)</i></u></p> <p>A Member requested an update on the situation regarding the request for a Joint Committee. He said Leisure Services had been considered by a Joint Committee initially, and he felt this arrangement should continue, particularly in light of a number of Members on the Regeneration Scrutiny Committee sitting on the Leisure Review Members’ Working Group.</p> <p>In response the Scrutiny Officer said Leisure Services sits within the remit of the Community Services Committee, and any request for a Joint Committee would need to be referred to the Chair of that Committee for consideration.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED, subject to the foregoing, that the action sheet be noted.</p>	
<p>No. 6</p>	<p><u>ENERGY PROSPECTUS</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Team Manager Regeneration Opportunities.</p>	

The Team Manager presented the report which sought Members' support to recommend the draft Energy Prospectus to the Executive for approval, to be released and marketed to potential project partners and investors. It was hoped that the Prospectus would demonstrate the proactive approach being taken by the Council to increase local energy generation and offer a significant contribution towards the reduction of our carbon footprint.

The Officer went through the report in detail and highlighted points contained therein.

A Member enquired regarding the air quality in Blaenau Gwent, and also what benefits could be expected after implementation of all the proposed initiatives. He was sceptical regarding the use of electric vehicles, as while there had been some advances, the infrastructure was still not in place for electric vehicles.

The Corporate Director Regeneration & Community Services said the air quality in the Borough was monitored and reported through the Scrutiny Committee on an annual basis. There were currently no issues with our air quality, and hopefully some of the initiatives outlined in the Energy Prospectus would ensure that position. In terms of implementation of projects, there was significant funding available to invest in energy projects, and the Council had committed to reducing our carbon footprint.

The Team Manager Regeneration Opportunities said reduction of the carbon footprint was on the National agenda, and there may well be targets imposed in the future, and financial penalties for not hitting those targets. In relation to the Member's comments regarding electric vehicles, the Officer said this was also part of the National agenda, and was something that the Council could not afford not to take into account, however, there was national funding available to support this initiative.

A Member said he fully supported and welcomed the report. As part of the Bridging the Gap proposals the Authority had committed to reducing its carbon footprint to zero by 2030, and he said this Prospectus was evidence that we are moving towards that target.

Another Member said he also welcomed the report, but felt that it could be extended to include the wider community.

In response the Officer said the Prospectus was very much a starting point, and it seemed appropriate to look at businesses in the first instance as they are the largest energy users in the Borough. However, another strand of the programme identified the need to understand how our residents use energy and what can be done to help them reduce their carbon footprint.

The Committee AGREED to recommend that the report be accepted and the Scrutiny Committee support the Blaenau Gwent Energy Prospectus and recommend approval by the Executive Committee (Option 2).

No. 7

LOCAL HOUSING STRATEGY REVIEW

Consideration was given to report of the Corporate Director Regeneration & Community Services.

The Residential Development Officer presented the report which informed Members of the requirement to update and revise the Local Housing Strategy (LHS) in line with Welsh Government guidance, and sought the views of the Committee prior to Executive approval to engage in developing a new Local Housing Strategy.

A discussion ensued when the Team Manager Connected Communities said the aim of the LHS was to achieve a balanced community with a greater mix of affordable housing and open market homes. Whilst we want to attract people to the area, we also want to create good quality homes for our residents. In terms of homelessness, the Officer said Blaenau Gwent did not have significant issues to the levels seen within Newport and Cardiff, however, there were people in Blaenau Gwent with no permanent housing arrangements and having to 'sofa surf' with family and friends.

A Member said this Strategy was very important for the Borough, and he was pleased to see a focus on the provision of good quality housing.

	<p>The Committee AGREED to recommend that the report be accepted and the Scrutiny Committee endorse the Council to work collaboratively with Gwent wide Local Authorities to investigate the possibility of producing a Regional Housing Strategy and local action plan (Option 2).</p>	
<p>No. 8</p>	<p><u>REGENERATION AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT SIX MONTH PERFORMANCE</u></p> <p>Councillor J.C. Morgan declared an interest in this item.</p> <p>Consideration was given to report of the Head of Regeneration.</p> <p>The Corporate Director Regeneration & Community Services presented the report which provided service activity from April 2019 to September 2019, and highlighted how the Department contributed towards four of the Council's corporate aims in terms of delivering a resilient Wales, healthier Wales, a more equal Wales, and a Wales of more cohesive communities. He said this was the first time the report had been presented in the new format.</p> <p>A discussion ensued when a Member said the report should include the aims of the Future Generations Act, and aspects of Tech Valleys and Cardiff City Deal.</p> <p>A Member welcomed the new format. He referred to the Aspire apprenticeship scheme and asked whether new housing developers in the Borough were being contacted regarding apprenticeship opportunities.</p> <p>In response the Team Manager Connected Communities confirmed that opportunities for apprenticeships were explored wherever possible with local contractors. In terms of the larger housing developments now coming through, some of the larger contractors offered apprenticeships as part of community benefits.</p> <p>A further discussion ensued regarding the options for recommendation, when a Member proposed an additional recommendation (Option 3), namely that the report be accepted, subject to the inclusion of the aims of the Future</p>	

	<p>Generations Act, and aspects of Tech Valleys and Cardiff City Deal.</p> <p>The Scrutiny Officer explained that the Member's comments would be raised as an action point and passed to the Performance Team for inclusion in future reports, Members agreed this course of action; and it was</p> <p>The Committee AGREED to recommend that the report be accepted as provided (Option 2).</p>	
<p>No. 9</p>	<p><u>TOWN CENTRE STRATEGY TASK AND FINISH GROUP</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to report of the Corporate Director Regeneration & Economic Development.</p> <p>The Team Manager Connected Communities presented the report which outlined the recommendation to establish a Town Centre Task and Finish Group.</p> <p>The Chair sought nominations from the Committee when a Member said there should be representation for each Town Centre.</p> <p>Following a brief discussion, the Chair confirmed that he would discuss representation with Members, and it was</p> <p>The Committee AGREED to recommend that the report be accepted and the establishment of a Town Centre Strategy Task and Finish Group be approved (Option 1).</p>	
<p>No. 10</p>	<p><u>FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME – 23RD JANUARY, 2020</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the Forward Work Programme for the meeting scheduled to be held on 23rd January, 2020.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED to recommend that the report be accepted.</p>	