

No.

ENVIRONMENT AND REGENERATION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of a meeting held on 24th September, 2019.

Present: Councillor Ms. B.E. Brooks (Chairman); Councillor Ms. S. Sivagnanam (Vice-Chairman); Councillors: V.J. Bailey, Mrs. P. Drake, V.P. Driscoll, G. John, A.R. Robertson, L.O. Rowlands and S.T. Wiliam.

Also present: Councillor L. Burnett (Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Education).

327 APOLOGY FOR ABSENCE –

This was received from Councillor M.J.G. Morgan.

328 MINUTES –

RECOMMENDED – T H A T the minutes of the meeting held on 23rd July, 2019 be approved as a correct record.

329 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST –

Councillor V.P. Driscoll declared an interest in respect of Agenda Item 5 – Wellbeing of Future Generations: An Examination of the Programme of Regeneration at Barry and Barry Island – Vale of Glamorgan Council (July 2019). The nature of the interest was that Councillor Driscoll was the owner of a number of commercial properties on Holton Road but as the report related to the strategic level, Councillor Driscoll declared an interest and stated that he would remain for the meeting during consideration of the item.

330 ANNUAL CORPORATE SAFEGUARDING REPORT – 2018/19 (REF) –

As there was no officer present to advise Members of the report, the Committee determined for this to be deferred to the next meeting.

RECOMMENDED – T H A T the Annual Corporate Safeguarding Report for 2018/19 be deferred to the October Committee meeting.

Reason for recommendation

In order to consider the Annual Corporate Safeguarding Report 2018/19.

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331 WELLBEING OF FUTURE GENERATIONS: AN EXAMINATION OF THE PROGRAMME OF REGENERATION AT BARRY AND BARRY ISLAND – VALE OF GLAMORGAN COUNCIL (JULY 2019) (DEH) –

The Head of Regeneration and Planning presented the report the purpose of which was to advise Members of the findings of the Auditor General for Wales' Wellbeing of Future Generations Act – Examination of the Council's Programme of Regeneration at Barry and Barry Island and the Council's response to the findings. For this item, and representing the Wales Audit Office, the Committee welcomed Mr. Ron Price and Mrs. Sara-Jane Byrne.

In accordance with the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015, the Auditor General for Wales was statutorily required to examine public bodies to assess the extent to which they had acted in accordance with the sustainable development principle when setting their well-being objectives and taking steps to meet them.

The Auditor General was required to provide a report on his examinations to the National Assembly for Wales at least a year before each Assembly election and the first such report must be published by 2020.

During 2018-19, the Auditor General had undertaken examinations across the 44 bodies covered by the Act to inform his report to the National Assembly. In May 2018, the Auditor General published his report, "Reflecting on Year One – How Have Public Bodies Responded to the Well-being of Future Generations Act (2015)", which concluded that public bodies supported the principles of the Act and were taking steps to change how they worked.

The findings in the report appended to the covering report were based on the fieldwork undertaken by the Wales Audit Office during the period January to February 2019, which focused on the programme of regeneration at Barry and Barry Island, a step the Council was taking to meet its Well-being Objectives.

Appendix A sets out the findings from the Wales Audit Office's Well-being of Future Generations Act examination of the programme of regeneration in Barry and Barry Island. It also outlined the Council's response to the findings in the form of a co-produced action plan involving officers from the Wales Audit Office, Officers from the Regeneration and Planning department and other senior managers.

The report findings were generally positive and the examination concluded overall, 'The Well-being of Future Generations Act required significant change to fully embed the five ways of working and it would take time to do this. We recognised the Council could demonstrate that it had acted in the spirit of the Act in its approach to regeneration in Barry. However, there was scope for the Council to do more to embed the five ways of working, clarify its vision and strategic approach, and integrate its plans with those of partner organisations in its regeneration of Barry.'

The key findings in relation to the five ways of working were:

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- 'The Council had considered short, medium and long-term needs in developing its approach to the regeneration of Barry and now needed to ensure the longer-term sustainability of this approach.
- The Council was undertaking many preventative activities, but there was scope to better consider the root causes of problems and the preventative benefits of the step.
- The Council had started to take an integrated approach but needed to consider more fully how this step contributed to its and others' wellbeing objectives to maximise the benefits the step could deliver.
- The Council had a track record of effective collaboration, but there was scope to develop a collective vision for the area with partners and stakeholders based on data and trend analysis.
- The Council could show a number of strengths in its approach to involving partners and other stakeholders, but it was not clear how the full diversity of the community was involved.'

In response to the report findings, a workshop was undertaken attended by officers from the Wales Audit Office, officers from the Regeneration and Planning department and other senior managers to develop an action plan (incorporated within the attached report at Appendix A) which would now be progressed by the Council and, also inform the development and delivery of the Corporate Plan going forward.

In line with the Council's performance monitoring arrangements, the key areas for improvement identified would be incorporated within the Insight Board's Tracker, which monitored progress monthly. Members of this Committee would continue to be informed of progress against all regulatory improvement areas via a half-year update report and this would be supplemented with the annual review of progress which will be reported to Scrutiny Committees prior to reporting to the Audit Committee for final oversight.

In responding to the WAO findings, and with permission to speak, the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Education stated that a lot of Council activity pre-dated 2015 and the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act. In fact, a lot of the Council activity informed some of the key aims of the Act such as the Council's Rural Communities Service. The Deputy Leader also stated that it was important to recognise that Regeneration and Planning only made up 2% of the Council's budget so funding was mainly on a grant basis. Therefore the Council had already met most of the Welsh Government funding criteria. It was also important to recognise that the Council had made representations to Welsh Government regarding funding being apportioned on a more holistic basis. In terms of education, the Deputy Leader highlighted that £150 million was being invested through the 21st Century Schools programme, which would mean that there would be benefits to many communities.

The Deputy Leader went on, and explained that the Welsh Government Minister had referred to 8 priority areas that were mainly generic which no one would disagree with. This was why the Council had undertaken mapping and was why the Sense of Place was so important. Another important aspect was the creation

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of a 'Barry Story' which helped to distil a unique identity for Barry. The Council were taking on board fully the main aims and objectives of the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act and so the Regeneration and Planning Team would co-ordinate efforts with all other Council directorates.

A Committee Member stated that one of the key areas of development highlighted by the Wales Audit Office was the need for a better long-term approach in relation to infrastructure. In reply, the Head of Regeneration and Planning stated that the key issues here were that the Council could not deliver infrastructure projects on its own and relied on partners and private sector organisations. An example of this was in relation to electric car charging points, for which, Welsh Government had tried to bring in standards in relation to new housing developments but this was difficult as new technology moved on so quickly. Infrastructure also included new broadband connectivity, for which, the Council was working closely with B.T. and so the issues were not just roads and schools, although these were just as important. The Head of Regeneration and Planning also stated that key infrastructure projects always took time to deliver, and it was important to recognise the success of the Vale Council in achieving Section 106 monies which were the most in Wales. Therefore, the Council did well in delivering infrastructure projects such as a new road for Cowbridge and many other projects delivered with partners. Another important consideration was the Metro that would provide many benefits and would help sustainability by the removal of cars and buses. For this, the Council needed to maximise Barry's location through the new Metro. This was progressing, but there was a recognition that there was always more that could be done, although in some circumstances, the Council relied on Welsh Government Legislation to help deliver certain projects.

A Committee Member queried whether this study was also being conducted across Wales and whether the WAO had benchmarked authorities. In reply, Mrs. Sara-Jane Byrne stated that the WAO had not benchmarked or compared local authority performance although each local authority would be assessed and a national report covering the wider context would be produced.

In relation to the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act and the development of a biomass plant in Barry, a Committee Member stated that this project went against some of the principals contained within the Act. The Member stated that the Act needed greater powers in order to prevent developments like this. In reply, the Head of Regeneration and Planning stated that the Biomass plant was not regeneration and was in fact a renewable energy project. This was licenced by Natural Resources Wales. The Biomass plant was a private sector scheme which pre dated and was therefore not regulated by the Act, but this was an ongoing process. He added that the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act (the Act) was an all-encompassing piece of Legislation which other legislation such as Planning and Licensing having their own specific guidelines but which were within the overarching framework of the Act. The Act was not there to police the developments but was about ensuring that public bodies took account of the Wellbeing Goals and the Five Ways of Working.

A Committee Member, as Ward Member for Barry Island, stated that he feared that the new Five Mile Lane Road would only make it more attractive for building

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lots of houses next to it. As for the Biomass development, the Member considered that the process was 'flawed' and that Welsh Government was terrified to admit that it needed an Environmental Impact Assessment for the fear of being sued by the applicant. He stated that he saw no regard for Future Generations there. With regards to the report by the WAO, he welcomed this, as it was another springboard and opportunity to discuss exciting potential developments. The Chair would be aware that he was requesting an overview of future economic developments at Barry Island as an item for consideration at November's meeting. The proposals there were very exciting and the Council needed to be ready to maximise the opportunities that came its way. With reference to the Auditor's report, and in accordance with the 'Five Ways of Working', he asked the Cabinet Member whether she would ensure the full involvement of local members from now on. In reply, the Deputy Leader stated that when it came to the Island, Ward Members in other parts of Barry would also have a keen interest and so it was important to involve all those who had an interest. She stated that she wanted greater engagement going forward. Further to these comments, the Head of Regeneration and Planning stated that the Council had introduced an Economic Development Team which mirrored structure and format of the work that had been done previously by the Creative Rural Communities Team. The Manager for that Team would be committed to ensuring that everybody was involved and this would be a key part going forward.

The Committee queried whether there were plans to speed up the Community Asset Transfer process. In reply, the Deputy Leader stated that this was an area of concern which needed greater focus in order to develop capacity in communities so that they could be successful. This was a key piece of work for the Creative Rural Communities Team in order to work with groups to increase their knowledge and ability to source funding. In addition, the Head of Regeneration and Planning stated that the strength of community groups was fundamental but it had been recognised that the process had been slower than the Council would have liked, but this would be assisted by the work of the Economic Development Team. This team would work with partners and other agencies to look at ways of delivering and maximising potential. Mr. Ron Price from the WAO stated that Community Asset Transfer was referred to on page 32 of the WAO's report which had flagged up that there was a challenge for community groups to create capacity.

Subsequently, it was

RECOMMENDED –

- (1) T H A T the key messages to emerge from the Wellbeing and Future Generations Act examination, including areas of progress, areas for development and the Council's response to the examination and Wales Audit Office recommendations, be noted.
- (2) T H A T the report be referred to Cabinet for its consideration.

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Reasons for recommendations

- (1) To provide for scrutiny and review of the Wales Audit Office's Wellbeing of Future Generations examination findings and the Council's response.
- (2) To ensure that Cabinet responds appropriately and implements the areas for improvements as identified by the Wales Audit Office.