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Place Scrutiny Committee – 6 October 2016

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE PLACE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE HELD AT COMMITTEE ROOM A - COUNTY HALL, LLANDRINDOD WELLS, POWYS ON THURSDAY, 6 OCTOBER 2016

PRESENT

County Councillors K W Curry, D O Evans, V E Evans, D C Jones, H Lewis, ET Morgan, G Morgan and R G Thomas

Officers: Paul Griffiths, Strategic Director, Place and Stuart Mackintosh, Head of Countryside and Recreation

1.	APOLOGIES	PLSC36-2016
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Apologies for absence were received from County Councillors G G Hopkins and G D Price.

2.	DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST	PLSC37-2016
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There were no declarations of interest.

3.	DISCLOSURES OF PARTY WHIPS	PLSC38-2016
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There were no disclosures of party whips.

A Member asked for a further explanation of this item and suggested that it be included in a Member Development Session.

4.	MINUTES	PLSC39-2016
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Documents:

- Minutes of meeting held on 16 June 2016

Outcome:

- **The Chair was authorised to sign the minutes of the last meeting as a correct record, subject to the attendance of Members being included**

5.	POWYS LEISURE MANAGEMENT CONTRACT	PLSC40-2016
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The Committee welcomed Gwyn Owen, Area Manager and Matt Hunt, Operations Director, of Freedom Leisure, who gave a presentation on the first year of operation of the Powys Leisure Management Contract.

- Contract let on 1 July 2015 for 15 years
- Introduced a 50 week delivery programme – swimming lessons are now provided throughout the year, not just in term time
- Investment in energy saving projects

- Free swimming for the armed forces continues
- A priority is to improve the quality of life for Powys residents
- Participation has increased 41% over the same period in the previous year
- This increase is continuing in the second year of the contract
- Membership programmes have been introduced
- Computer systems have been introduced at all sites to ensure collection of accurate data
- Significant expenditure has been incurred in the first year – both capital and in repairs and maintenance. Gyms and fitness suites have been improved or introduced and this has been key in the increase in participation. Additional exercise classes are available. Lighting schemes, air handling and insulation of plant and equipment have also been installed. This will lead to increased energy efficiency and should return financial savings in future years. Renewables had not been included as the payback times would not be within the contract term. However, these would not be discounted if a business case could be made.
- Working with partners is key
- CYPP is a key partner
- Powys is unique with different options in place across the county
- New IT systems have been introduced – Scuba Leisure Management, direct debit scheme and Course Pro
- A Welsh language policy is in place
- Swim teachers are being upskilled
- A monthly newsletter is produced
- Freedom Leisure are confident that the benefits of investment will be reflected in the second year of operation
- A number of capital projects are complete
- Business cases are being produced for new projects
- Local events are supported
- There is a programme of outreach activities
- Work will continue with partners on health and wellbeing
- The Financial Programme will be improved
- Members challenged Freedom Leisure over their work with schools. Freedom work closely with schools and a service level agreement has been agreed. Relationships are key at those sites which neighbour schools. The pressures on school sites are varied but generally work well together. Half of centres are joint use facilities – these must be managed locally, not centrally. The agreement in place when Freedom Leisure took over was not working well and has been improved. There had been a decrease in school swimming at some sites but this had also been affected by transport costs and school budgets. It was noted that school swimming was commissioned to a higher level in Powys than in other authorities.
- Members raised the issue of potential changes to service at Knighton and Llanfair Caereinion – Members would be given the opportunity to scrutinize proposals when available
- The Strategic Director, Place informed the Committee that the MTFs was seeking savings, a significant proportion of which fell within the Place Directorate. The aim was to provide as many facilities for the lowest cost.

Freedom Leisure were willing to work with the Authority to achieve additional savings. A feasible business case is needed for the remaining 14 years of the contract.

County Councillor R G Thomas arrived at 10.45

- Investment will tend to be where there is the potential to grow income. Although a commercial approach is taken, Freedom Leisure are flexible
- Freedom Leisure is a not for profit organisation so reinvestment in other properties would be undertaken where possible
- As an Authority, assurance is needed regarding the sustainability for the management of contracts as the authority transforms
- There is regular contact between the Client Officer, Property Service and Freedom Leisure
- Quarterly meetings are held with Freedom Leisure, comprising 3 directors/managers of Freedom, the Strategic Director Place, Head of Service and legal and finance officers. The Chair of Place Scrutiny Committee is also invited to attend. Detailed reports on activities, including finance are provided and subject to robust challenge.
- This was a similar approach to that taken with other authorities.
- Members asked for some more detail on Freedom Leisure’s other activities – they currently operate 74 centres for 15 local authorities and some small charity sites. Freedom Leisure has been in operation since 2002 but underwent a significant expansion in 2008. Turnover is in the region of £60M.
- Freedom Leisure were asked where future improvements would be – the Council’s needs have to be met and facilities need to be to a specified standard. The aim is to get more people, more active, more often. There is a need to engage with harder to reach groups, including rural communities. Evaluation of customer feedback will also help deliver future programmes. Each site has its own service improvement plan which is developed by customer feedback, external audits and industry assessments. Each site has a Site Manager who is responsible for actioning the SIP.

6.	PLACE SCRUTINY WORKING GROUP 1 - LIBRARY SERVICE REVIEW	PLSC41-2016
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Documents:

- Scrutiny summary report

Discussion:

- Members were of the opinion that the challenge of local delivery was a major issue
- S137 grants had been a major concern but guidance from counsel had been received and would be disseminated to town and community councils
- Timescales were a constant pressure particularly when negotiating local solutions
- Whilst voluntary support was sought, it could not be enforced

- The issue of smaller councils contributing towards town services was also debated
- Some councils had no wish to move away from traditional service delivery
- Discussions have been ongoing with One Voice Wales to encourage greater collaboration but this has not yet come to fruition
- Members were of the opinion that libraries were not given sufficient recognition for the other work they undertook

Outcome:

- **Noted**

7.	PLACE SCRUTINY WORKING GROUP 2 - HOUSEHOLD WASTE RECYCLING CENTRES	PLSC42-2016
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Documents:

- Scrutiny summary report

Outcome:

- **Noted**

8.	PLACE SCRUTINY WORKING GROUP 3 - OUTLINE BUSINESS CASE, HIGHWAYS TRANSPORT AND RECYCLING	PLSC43-2016
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Documents:

- Scrutiny summary report

Outcome:

- **Noted**

9.	JOINT CHAIRS AND VICE CHAIRS STEERING GROUP	PLSC44-2016
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Documents:

- Notes of meetings held on 5 July and 13 September 2016

Outcome:

- **Noted**

10.	WORK PROGRAMME	PLSC45-2016
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45.1. Work Programme

Documents:

- Work Programme

Discussion:

- Potential items for consideration by scrutiny - income generation
- Further information on crime in the field of communication would be requested for the crime and disorder report scheduled to be presented to the next meeting

Outcome:

- **Noted**

45.2. Timing of working group meetings

It had been suggested that the Committee debate the timing of working group meetings to enable working Members to attend. It was agreed to defer discussion of this item until the Member making the suggestion could be present.

11.	CORRESPONDENCE	PLSC46-2016
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There were no items of correspondence.

County Councillor K W Curry

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