

THE VALE OF GLAMORGAN COUNCIL

CABINET: 12TH DECEMBER, 2016

REFERENCE FROM ENVIRONMENT AND REGENERATION SCRUTINY
COMMITTEE: 8TH NOVEMBER, 2016

“507 SENSE OF PLACE LED REGENERATION IN BARRY (REF) –

Cabinet, at its meeting on 26th September, 2016 had referred the report to the Scrutiny Committee for consideration having resolved:

- That the feedback report be published on the Council’s website.
- That delegated authority be granted to the Head of Regeneration and Planning in consultation with the Leader and Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Education to continue to develop and administer the Sense of Place Project based on the solutions proposed in the feedback report, including engagement with the community where necessary.

The report was also to be forwarded to Barry Town Council for information and presented to the next meeting of the Barry Regeneration Advisory Group.

Angharad Wynne, the leading Sense of Place Advisor for Visit Wales, was present at the Scrutiny meeting and provided a presentation on the Sense of Place Project. The Committee was informed that Sense of Place Regeneration “involves engaging with and re-inspiring community and tourism groups about their locality to harness their knowledge in order to provide improved and enriched interpretation of that place and an increased sense of pride and ownership. The Regeneration Forum also serves to bring together people from different parts of the Barry community giving them an opportunity to interact and discuss the issues affecting the fabric of the town and surrounding area.” As part of the Regeneration Forum, Angharad Wynne had devised and run workshops to ascertain current thoughts and attitudes towards Barry, to capture issues, highlight possibilities and to gauge the appetite for and priorities for change. A feedback report which was prepared after the Annual Regeneration Forum in May by Angharad Wynne was attached at Appendix 1 to the report and provided an account of the work undertaken with regard to the development of Barry’s Sense of Place as a tool for the regeneration of the town.

Ms. Wynne commenced her presentation by advising that the aim of the work was:

- to clarify Barry’s story and its future trajectory;
- to engage with residents and people of Barry behind the common vision for the town and to encourage them to play their part;
- to develop a new brand proposition for Barry that communicated the places story and vision clearly and consistently in a contemporary and attractive fashion;

- to harness all regeneration activities, town centre planning and developments within public realm towards communicating Barry's story clearly, confidently and ingeniously;
- to raise Barry's sense of ambition and raise its profile as a thriving and attractive place to live, work, invest and play;
- to make the place the hero;
- to enhance place making skills of the teams in and around Barry.

The key issues arising were referred to as :-

- Ensuring the sensory environment did not lack management and thought;
- Ensuring Barry's story was visible;
- Improving gateways;
- Improving signage;
- Ensuring navigation around the town was made easy and obvious;
- Visitor focused spaces had received investment and had improved;
- Improving the town centre frontage and atmosphere;
- Ensuring Barry was a town held together at present;
- Engaging the community in the process;
- Improving the cleanliness and maintenance of key areas;
- Ensuring assets were properly presented and not overlooked."

Ms. Wynne advised that the gateways in the area were not clear and some did not make a good impression. It was obvious that Barry Island had undergone significant improvement and looked great but the town centre appeared to be "lagging behind". In referring to some of the assets that were poorly presented, Ms. Wynne referred to an example of the castle and the need to signpost such landmarks for information for visitors and residents. The entry points to the town were marked by relatively corporate name boards saying Welcome to Barry but they could be easily missed and, in her view, communicated nothing about the personality of the area. During the workshop participants were asked to prioritise activities to support redevelopment and the regeneration of Barry based on solutions which had successfully supported regeneration and place making in other towns and cities in the UK. The Appendix to the report, at Chapter 5, detailed prioritising solutions and additional ideas for regeneration and improvements for Barry. The workshop participants who took part in the Regeneration Forum in May had been split into ten groups and each group had been given three questions to answer, with responses clustered under the following subject headings: Barry's Story; Barry's Issues, Problems, Things to Tackle; Best Things, Assets, Positives; Barry's Physical Assets; Current Impressions, Value of Barry, Aspirations, Looking Forward; Personality and People of Barry.

In providing the presentation, Ms. Wynne also referred to a number of initiatives and activities that had been undertaken throughout Wales. At Holyhead in North Wales they too had commissioned a Sense of Place project. In noting that cruise ships were regularly stopping at Holyhead, they had developed a link with the cruise ships and the town by thinking in a different way in order to capture visitors into the area. Ms. Wynne stated that it was also important that the use of visual language be

considered, style of photography, billboards, signage with its own style and public realm furniture to encourage visitors and ownership within the locality.

Members of the Scrutiny Committee welcomed the report and its completeness in acknowledging the number of aspects that made up the story of Barry. However, with regard to street naming, a Member requested that the Council should consider the local heritage and other aspects pertinent to the area to ensure that the names correlated with the full history of the area. The Member also concurred with the report that the Sense of Place needed to be linked with the different parts of the town and its heritage and in particular the need to work with local developers. In considering the report, reference was also made to some areas in Barry which were the responsibility of Network Rail and were being addressed e.g. fencing along the Causeway at Ship Hill and the railings at Dock View Road. Ms. Wynne advised that it was paramount that working together with key stakeholders and the community took place in order that a passionate and clear vision for the future was shared by all with working as one.

A Member suggested that if the Council was serious about developing the economy, it needed to address the issue of car parking. He further stated that with regard to the establishment of the Beach Huts, some were too small. The Chairman, however, advised that Members had had the opportunity on a number of occasions to put forward concerns or suggestions with regard to the Beach Huts prior to their implementation. The Chairman also pointed out for the benefit of the Committee the workshops detailed in the report had identified that the Beach Huts were seen as a good example of one of the physical assets of Barry Island.

Communications and Public Relations operations were also seen as key in promoting Barry, however, Ms. Wynne stated that she had no view on the Council's current PR arrangements but stated that in her opinion, there were improvements to be made to the area before the Council invested further in PR work.

The Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Education advised that the importance of the Sense of Place report was that it was part of a process to develop a strategy for shared ownership and to bring together all key stakeholders in a common goal. The Cabinet Member in particular referred to the development of the Vale Ambassadors initiative in order to encourage community engagement and referred to the Barry Island Historical Group, who were passionate about the area and who would be engaged in the process.

The Head of Service for Regeneration and Planning advised that some of the issues raised at the meeting were very relevant to the work that was to be addressed under the Project and requested that any individual comments on the report be forwarded to himself in order that they could be fed into the process.

The Head of Visible Services and Transport took the opportunity to inform Committee that she was currently in discussions with Network Rail concerning the issues at Dock View Road and that the Committee was due to receive a progress report in January in relation to the Beach Huts policy.

In referring to car parking issues, it was noted there were 193 free spaces on Barry Island with the Chairman reminding Members of the Request for Consideration of Matter process which provided the opportunity for reports on issues to be brought before the Committee for consideration.

Councillor Dr. I.J. Johnson, not a Member of the Committee, with permission to speak, stated that when the report had been forwarded to Ward Members for consultation, the Appendix had not been attached and he requested that in future, all the relevant information be attached for their consideration. He was pleased to note that further focus groups were being planned and in considering further opportunities suggested that monies could be realised from Section 106 funding for such projects, in particular for modern art. He asked that opposition Members be also included to sit on various regeneration bodies in order that comments can be provided at such Forums.

In response to a query from Councillor Johnson as to how she saw the Council taking forward any tangible schemes, Ms. Wynne stated that she was aware the Council was facing the same challenges regarding funding as other Councils and that the whole programme was designed to look at what funds were available and how the Council could provide such schemes in different ways. The purpose of the project and the report was to provide Councils with the foundations and skills needed to go forward. The Cabinet Member commented that funding was a challenge as the service was a non-statutory service and the Council needed to look at a programme of work and how it could be funded in various different ways. It was acknowledged by the Head of Service for Regeneration and Planning that the document was a framework that would inform all the future work for regeneration.

Councillor N. Hodges, not a Member of the Committee, with permission to speak, advised Members that the forthcoming Learning and Culture Scrutiny Committee meeting on 14th November, 2016 would be considering a report on art development and suggestions for a museum heritage centre. He also took the opportunity to state that he looked forward to further workshops being held and would be keen to take part. He, however, queried the role of the Place Board questioning whether this would be different to the Regeneration Board and whether the Regeneration Board still existed. He too concurred that the Council needed to extend and promote the treasures of Barry and in particular suggested that the Victorian Stench Pipes (cast-iron) be repainted in Victorian colour schemes which he considered would be another treasure and another heritage area for signposting. He was also keen to see the Harbour area being renewed and would encourage consultation with ABP in that respect. He concurred that signage in general had been neglected for some time and queried what specific funding would be available for tourism promotion as a result.

The Operational Manager for Regeneration referred to the fact that funding sources were always a challenge but that the Council needed to tap into existing funds, including the Rural Community Development Fund and Regional Tourism Engagement Fund which the Council had succeeded in accessing several times.

A Member of the Committee stated that Barry Island was blessed with incredible topography and the work that had been undertaken on Barry Island and the

attractions to date were excellent. Together with the other historical references throughout the town, this was an opportunity for further development. Although he queried whether the overall strategy had been correct in the first instance in that it appeared that the Council should have been undertaking this project some four years previously. He referred to work that had already taken place by Penarth Town Council, who had commissioned a similar strategy and that it disappointed him that the strategy before Committee was focused only on one area.

The Head of Service for Regeneration and Planning advised that the project was a significant scheme but it was a blueprint that could be tailored to be driven throughout the Vale of Glamorgan but was very much driven by Welsh Government Funding. An overall strategy had to date not been in place as the Council had to focus on other schemes where funding allowed. The key issue was that Barry had benefitted from funding for regeneration projects from both the Council and Welsh Government and it therefore now had a platform that could be pursued further. For completeness, the Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Education referred to a number of schemes that had been undertaken by the Vale Council in the Penarth area, in particular the Penarth Pier and the Penarth Picnic scheme which had been a success in the current year. The Penarth Heights Project had also delivered considerable Section 106 funding from developers.

Ms. Wynne advised that in terms of timing, there was a time when a place became ready for Sense of Place and it was her view that a lot of work had already been undertaken within Barry, which now resulted in the timing being right for this initiative. The whole purpose of the Sense of Place agenda was about pulling together a place that was ready to be pulled together and that the personality of a place would be a driver for projects.

Having fully considered the report, it was subsequently

RECOMMENDED -

- (1) T H A T the comments of the Scrutiny Committee be referred to Cabinet and to the Place Board when established in order that they can consider the comments of the Scrutiny Committee when taking forward the Sense of Place project.
- (2) T H A T Ms. Wynne be thanked for her comprehensive presentation to the Scrutiny Committee which had been welcomed by all.

Reasons for recommendations

- (1) To allow for the comments of the Scrutiny Committee to be considered as appropriate.
- (2) In recognition of the work undertaken and the report presented to the Committee.”