



REGENERATION AND ENVIRONMENT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD AT PENALLTA HOUSE, YSTRAD MYNACH ON
TUESDAY, 15TH SEPTEMBER 2015 AT 5.30 P.M.**

PRESENT:

Councillor D.T. Davies – Chair – Part of meeting
Councillor Mrs E.M. Aldworth - Vice-Chair - Presiding

Councillors:

Mrs A. Blackman, C.J. Cuss, N. Dix, C. Elsbury, R.W. Gough, Ms J.G. Jones, S. Kent,
Mrs P. Leonard, M.J. Prew, A. Rees, Mrs E. Stenner

Cabinet Members:

N. George (Community and Leisure Services), K. James (Regeneration, Planning and Sustainable Development), T.J. Williams (Highways, Transportation and Engineering)

Together with:

C. HARRY (Corporate Director – Education and Community Services), M.S. Williams (Head of Community and Leisure Services), C. Campbell (Transportation Engineering Manager), R. Kyte (Team Leader, Strategic and Development Plans), P. Martin (Principal Conservation and Design Officer), L. Lane (Solicitor) and R. Barrett (Committee Services Officer)

1. PRESIDING CHAIR

In the absence of Councillor D.T. Davies (Chair), Councillor Mrs E.M. Aldworth (Vice-Chair) opened the meeting and presided as Chair until his arrival.

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

An apology for absence was received from Councillor J. Bevan.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest received at the commencement or during the course of the meeting.

4. MINUTES – 30TH JUNE 2015

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Regeneration and Environment Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 30th June 2015 (minute nos. 1 – 12) be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

5. CALL-IN PROCEDURE

There had been no matters referred to the Scrutiny Committee in accordance with the call-in procedure.

6. REPORT OF THE CABINET MEMBERS

The Scrutiny Committee received verbal reports from Cabinet Members K. James, T.J. Williams and N. George.

Councillor K. James, Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Planning, updated Members on the success of Caerphilly's Business Support Team, which has been identified as one of the leading authorities in Wales for supporting local businesses. This has been achieved with the aid of the Local Investment Fund, which is a flexible grant scheme delivered through a partnership across local authorities in South East Wales.

Members were informed that on 17th September 2015, the First Minister will formally open the new improvements and refurbishment of Llancaiach Fawr. The £760,000 Heritage Lottery Fund project has seen major improvements to this tourist attraction, with a new disabled-access staircase, a new roof and opening up of the attic spaces. The investment will help with the long term sustainability of this tourist attraction through increasing visitors and income generation.

Members were advised that the Winding House museum and heritage centre in New Tredegar has reached the final stage of the Telegraph Family Friendly Museum Award. This award - Britain's biggest museum award and the only one to be judged by families – considers which museums across the UK go that extra mile to welcome and engage family visitors. It is the first time for nearly 10 years that a museum in Wales has been shortlisted for the award. Throughout the summer, undercover family judges will visit each shortlisted museum and the eventual winner will be announced on Thursday 24th September 2015.

The Cabinet Member advised that the Caerphilly and Blaenau Gwent Rural Development Programme was approved in August 2015. This programme, which covers the majority of the county borough, will provide grant assistance of approximately £2.6 million over the next six years. The programme is a key initiative to secure the regeneration of rural areas.

Members were informed that Welsh Government are proposing to introduce a number of improvements to the planning system, including a requirement to return planning fees if decisions are not made within a certain period, and as a result of these changes, Planning Officers will be reviewing their processes. It is also intended to introduce a new site visit procedure for Members, whereby site visits will take place the day before a Planning Committee meeting, rather than items being deferred at the meeting itself and delaying the determination by at least four weeks.

Discussion took place regarding the Local Investment Fund and the Welsh Government's decision to remove future support for this funding. The Cabinet Member explained that there was little that could be done in respect of this decision and outlined the ways in which local businesses had benefitted from this funding.

In response to a query regarding changes to the planning system, the Cabinet Member explained that Planning Officers and Planning Committee Members would be mindful of all relevant legislation and that these changes would not impact negatively on the decision-making process. The Cabinet Member also clarified the new procedure in respect of site visit requests and confirmed that the new system would be implemented in the near future.

Councillor T.J. Williams, Cabinet Member for Highways, Transportation and Engineering, presented his report and advised Members that approximately 9,000 LED street light bulbs

are being replaced throughout the county borough, at a rate of approximately 300 per week. The estimated completion date is at the end of the 2015/16 financial year.

Members were informed that the traffic light improvement scheme at Crumlin Junction is set for completion within the next two weeks. It is anticipated that motorists should see a much improved and efficient junction for their use.

The next phase of the A469 feasibility study between New Tredegar and Pontlottyn is due to start shortly and will consist of an extensive site investigation. The main focus of this investigation will be within the Pontlottyn, Abertysswg and New Tredegar areas and will involve drilling and tyre pitting.

Councillor N. George, Cabinet Member for Community and Leisure Services, informed Members that on Monday 7th September 2015, he attended the launch of the Coach of the Future Scheme (COAF) for 2015/16. The scheme is entering its eighth year and continues to go from strength to strength, with many local authorities following Caerphilly's blueprint for success in developing future coaches. As Sport Caerphilly received its Leadership Academy status in July 2015, this endorses the role that they play in developing future sports leaders.

On Wednesday 19th August 2015, the Positive Futures scheme held its inaugural Football Festival at the Centre for Sporting Excellence in Ystrad Mynach. The scheme has gone from strength to strength since its inception in October 2014. The aim of Positive Futures is to offer positive alternatives to substance misuse and anti-social behaviour through sport, create safer and more inclusive communities by building a culture of respect, increase youth volunteering, provide quality access to services for young people in their communities, and forge partnership links with external organisations.

Members were advised of the Council's recent acquisition of a second-hand double decker bus, arising from a partnership between the Engineering and Community and Leisure Services departments. The Council's in-house vehicle maintenance workshop is currently undertaking conversion works to provide a 'Tree Bus', involving the removal of the bus roof to provide a high level, safe working platform so that the Authority can easily and cost-effectively maintain tree canopies on its strategic routes. This project is being funded by the Engineering budget, and the bus will be operated by the Grounds Maintenance service once the conversion is completed later this autumn. It is also anticipated that it may be offered as a service to neighbouring authorities.

In response to queries, the Cabinet Member and Officers confirmed that the Tree Bus had been purchased second-hand at a reasonable cost, that it has a low level of mileage, and that staff may need to hold a PSV bus licence in order to drive it. Officers outlined the benefits of the Tree Bus in comparison to other maintenance vehicles (such as cherry picker elevated work platforms), explaining that it will be safer and more stable owing to the size of the working platform and its safety rails, and will be easier to operate from a traffic management perspective.

The Cabinet Members were thanked for their reports.

7. ARRIVAL OF CHAIR

Upon his arrival, Councillor D.T. Davies moved to the position of Chair for the remainder of the meeting.

8. CABINET REPORTS

None of the Cabinet reports listed on the agenda had been called forward for discussion at the meeting.

REPORTS OF OFFICERS

Consideration was given to the following reports.

9. BUTE TOWN CONSERVATION AREA APPRAISAL AND CONSERVATION AREA MANAGEMENT PLAN (CAA AND CAMP) FINAL DRAFT 2015

Pat Martin (Principal Conservation and Design Officer) presented the report, which sought the views of Members on proposals to adopt the Bute Town Conservation Area Appraisal and Conservation Area Management Plan 2015 (CAA and CAMP) as supplementary planning guidance to the Caerphilly County Borough Local Development Plan up to 2021 (LDP). Following its presentation to the Regeneration and Environment Scrutiny Committee, it was due to be presented to Cabinet for consideration and thereafter Council for approval.

Members were advised that Bute Town was first designated a Conservation Area on 20th October 1972. An Article 4 Direction for Bute Town has also been in place since 23rd April 1979. As a consequence of work associated with the bid for Heritage Lottery Funding for Bute Town, the Conservation Area has been reassessed, and on 11th February 2015 the Planning Committee resolved to extend and re-align the Conservation Area. They further resolved to replace the Article 4 Direction with a new, extended Article 4(2) Direction boundary, for the proper and sustainable management of the historic environment.

Officers explained that a Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan (CAA and CAMP) for Bute Town has now been produced which reflects the updated Conservation Area Boundary, and approval is sought to adopt this as supplementary planning guidance to the Caerphilly County Borough Local Development Plan up to 2021 (LDP). As this will supersede existing guidance, approval is also sought for the current 'Bute Town Conservation Area Design Guide' and 'Bute Town Conservation Area Enhancement Plan (August 2005)' to be consequently cancelled.

Discussion of the report ensued and Members extended their thanks to Officers for the work carried out in respect of the forthcoming bid for Heritage Lottery Funding, which is an important source of finance for Conservation Area enhancement projects. It was queried whether there were increased planning controls arising from the re-designation of the Bute Town Conservation Area and the replacement Article 4(2) Direction. Officers confirmed that this would result in a more tiered approach to planning works in respect of listed buildings, conservation areas and Article 4(2) Direction areas.

Reference was made to a lean-to structure within Bute Town and its impact on visual amenity, and it was queried whether action could be taken to address this issue. Officers advised that they had discussed with conservation architects whether it could possibly be screened off with trees/hedging as an interim measure. They explained that if further funding bids were successful, this structure could potentially be considered for development in the future.

Following consideration of the report, it was moved and seconded that the following recommendations be forwarded to Cabinet for consideration and thereafter Council for approval. By a show of hands, this was unanimously agreed.

RECOMMENDED to Cabinet (and thereafter Council) that:-

- (i) the Bute Town Conservation Area Appraisal and Conservation Area Management Plan 2015 (CAA and CAMP) be formally adopted as supplementary planning guidance to the Caerphilly County Borough Local Development Plan up to 2021 (LDP);
- (ii) the 'Bute Town Conservation Area Design Guide' and 'Bute Town Conservation Area Enhancement Plan (August 2005)' be consequently cancelled.

10. LOCAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN 2015 ANNUAL MONITORING REPORT

Rhian Kyte (Team Leader, Strategic and Development Plans) presented the report, which outlined the findings and recommendations of the Caerphilly County Borough Local Development Plan (LDP) 2015 Annual Monitoring Report (AMR). Following presentation to the Regeneration and Environment Scrutiny Committee, it was due to be presented to Cabinet for consideration and thereafter Council for approval.

Members were asked to note the overview of the LDP Monitoring Data for the 2015 AMR, which provides an insight into the implementation of the LDP over the monitoring period. For the first time, the AMR also provides information on the implementation of the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL), which was introduced on 1st July 2014. Due to this recent introduction, only planning applications approved after that date would be CIL liable and only those that have commenced on site would have generated income. Therefore no income was raised in the monitoring period 1st April 2014 to 31st March 2015 and consequently no schemes have been undertaken.

The 2015 AMR concludes that substantial progress has been made in implementing the LDP up to 2021. However, the 2013 AMR triggered the first review of the LDP in October 2013 as a result of these findings, and these issues remain the same for the 2015 AMR. The lack of a five-year housing land supply is a matter of concern that needs to be addressed, as evidence indicates that it is unlikely that this position will improve in the next few years. Officers explained that there could be a need to release limited greenfield sites in the short term to address the supply issue. The review of the LDP will further address the land supply issue through the allocation of sites that are capable of being delivered in viable parts of the county borough.

As a result of these findings, the 2015 Annual Monitoring Report recommendations are as follows:-

- R1 The 2015 Annual Monitoring Plan has indicated that substantial progress has been made over the plan period in implementing the Caerphilly County Borough Local Development Plan up to 2021.
- R2 The 2015 Annual Monitoring Report has indicated that there is a continuing need to release limited greenfield sites in the short term to address the lack of a five year housing land supply.

During the course of the debate, discussion took place in respect of the use of a number of brownfield sites previously identified for development, ahead of the identification and consideration of any future greenfield allocations. Officers outlined the current LDP strategy and the criteria for land supply release across the county borough, together with reasons why those brownfield sites previously identified were not currently a feasible source of land supply. It was suggested by a Member that empty industrial units/factories could be considered as an alternative to the allocation of greenfield sites.

Officers emphasised the need for the current land supply shortage to be addressed and explained that a pragmatic approach would be undertaken in the event of releasing limited greenfield sites. They gave assurances that all potential releases would be determined on their individual merit following a detailed assessment of the sites against the Caerphilly County Borough Local Development Plan and taking into account all other planning and material considerations. Discussion also took place regarding changes to Technical Advice Note 1 which has led to a change in the way in which the five year land supply is calculated.

Reference was made to the Community Infrastructure Levy, which allows local authorities to raise funds for developers to support building projects in their area. Discussion took place regarding the allocation of the local community element of the levy (currently 15%), and the involvement of local ward Members as to its potential use. Officers explained that if a

town/community council operates within a recipient area, they will receive the monies directly, although they are encouraged to liaise with Council Officers and local ward Members as to its use.

Members considered and noted the findings of the 2015 Annual Monitoring Report and the implications of the recommendations detailed therein. It was moved and seconded that the following recommendations be forwarded to Cabinet for consideration and thereafter Council for approval. By a show of hands (and in noting there were 3 against) this was agreed by the majority present.

RECOMMENDED to Cabinet (and thereafter Council) that:-

- (i) the findings of the 2015 Annual Monitoring Report and the implications of the recommendations contained therein be noted;
- (ii) the 2015 Annual Monitoring Report be approved;
- (iii) the 2015 Annual Monitoring Report be submitted to the Welsh Government before the deadline of 31st October 2015.

11. UPDATE ON ROAD SAFETY DELIVERY IN CAERPHILLY COUNTY BOROUGH

Clive Campbell (Transportation Engineering Manager) presented the report, which updated Members on the delivery of road safety initiatives within the county borough.

Members were advised that the Welsh Government has set specific targets for road casualty reduction to be achieved by 2020. These targets are being met and exceeded within the county borough. Members were referred to the graphs contained within the report, which display a notable achievement in casualty reduction over the past four years, and reflect the sustained and coordinated programme of work that has been undertaken to reduce the number of road casualties.

Officers outlined the wide range of road safety engineering and education, training and publicity schemes that have been implemented in the county borough. Full details of these were contained within the report. It was explained that it is essential for this combined and focused approach to improving road safety to continue, in order to achieve a sustained reduction in road casualties and build upon the success to date.

Discussion took place regarding the benefits of School Travel Plan initiatives, and a Member queried the enforcement of parking restrictions near schools. Members were advised to report instances of illegal parking to the police so that any such situations could be addressed promptly.

Reference was made to Road Safety Week, whereby a number of junior school pupils supported the campaign by recording "naughty parkers" outside their school and noted people not wearing seatbelts. This information was then presented at school assembly and passed onto parents via the school newsletter. In response to a Member's query as to whether the information noted by the children should be passed onto police, Officers explained that it was up to the individual school to decide what to do with this information. Members were advised that this scheme had resulted in a positive behavioural change by parking offenders, in that they had formed an association between the children noting their actions and the importance of ensuring that children stay safe on the roads around the school area.

Following consideration of the report, Members noted its contents, together with the progress and impact of the road safety initiatives delivered within the county borough.

12. CONSIDERATION OF IMPLEMENTING 20MPH SPEED LIMITS IN CAERPHILLY COUNTY BOROUGH

The report considered the implications of implementing 20mph speed limits across the county borough within residential areas, and had been prepared following a request from a Member of the Regeneration and Environment Scrutiny Committee.

Officers explained that the Council's adopted Speed Management Strategy (SMS) is an evidenced-based approach that seeks to implement 20mph speed limits and zones in accordance with national guidance and best practice. Through this SMS, 20mph speed limits or zones are only considered for implementation in a fairly localised area around a school or locations of main attractors of vulnerable road users. The SMS requires the school to have a Travel Plan as this provides useful information and evidence about problems and also secures additional benefits such as a commitment to travel more sustainably and community support. The main benefit of a 20mph speed limit outside schools is that it encourages sustainable travel and also educates drivers (and future drivers) about the area in which they travel being in close proximity to a main attractor of vulnerable road users.

To date 20mph limits have been introduced around 38 school sites (over half of the schools within the county borough). Each year the schools continue to develop their Travel Plans and at present the Engineering Services Division is working with 16 schools to develop their Travel Plans and action plans, some of which will result in further 20mph limits.

Through the SMS the Council's Engineering Services Division responds to approximately 180 requests/complaints each year related to concerns over excessive speed. Many of these request traffic calming or 20mph limits but only approximately 10% satisfy the criteria for intervention (through the use of vehicle activated signs or safety camera unit enforcement). None have so far met the intervention criteria (that is based on recorded vehicular speeds and the personal injury collision history for a given site) for physical traffic calming.

Officers referred to the "20's Better For Us" Campaign which is calling for a 20mph default speed limit in residential and urban streets across the UK. It was explained that this restriction has been examined by a number of local authorities, but for those authorities in England and Scotland that have undertaken trials/changes there had been no conclusive evidence of improvements. Signage-only 20mph limits appear to be more suited to high density urban areas with high percentages of pedestrians and cyclists. Most rural or semi rural local authorities who have considered the proposal decided that it was not suitable for their particular circumstances.

Members were asked to note that within Caerphilly County Borough, most personal injury collisions are not within residential areas. The Council's approach to date has realised significant improvements in casualty reduction and is exceeding Welsh Government targets. Therefore the widespread use of signage only 20mph speed limits in residential areas is not recommended, and Members were asked to consider the achievability and outcomes if introducing such speed limits on a widespread basis. In addition, Members were also advised that the Department for Transport (Dft) has commissioned a three-year project researching the effectiveness of 20mph speed limits in order to "support and inform future policy development on 20mph speed limits and zones", with the final report anticipated in 2017.

Discussion of the report ensued, with a particular focus on road safety performance in the county borough and the number of personal injury collision records received from Gwent Police over the past 5 years (as detailed in Section 4.20 of the report). Concerns were raised that there could be many more collisions that were not being reported or subsequently recorded. Members expressed an urgent need for 20mph speed limits to be considered across the county borough in residential areas, stating that such implementation would have long-term benefits to children in respect of road safety education.

Officers emphasised the road safety measures implemented across the county borough and the positive reduction in road casualty numbers as a result. They explained that a number of new traffic calming measures in the county borough have been implemented, which have successfully reduced speeds within residential areas without resorting to 20mph speed limit restrictions. Proactive measures have also been undertaken, including road safety education and training in schools and colleges to raise pupil/student awareness of these issues. Officers also reiterated to Members the many financial, enforcement and technical implications that needed to be taken into consideration regarding the implementation of 20mph speed limits.

During the course of the debate, an additional recommendation was moved and seconded, that a Task and Finish Group be established to further examine the matter of 20mph speed limits. By a show of hands, this was unanimously agreed.

Following consideration of the report, it was moved and seconded that the following recommendations, including the additional recommendation, be endorsed. By a show of hands, it was unanimously agreed that:-

- (i) the Authority's existing approach to progressing additional 20mph speed limits and zones be supported;
- (ii) the appraisal of additional 20mph speed limits/zones should continue to be consistent with the current policy that is included in the adopted Speed Management Strategy;
- (iii) the Council should consider the forthcoming Department for Transport research report on the effectiveness of 20mph speed limits;
- (iv) a Task and Finish Group be established to further examine the matter of 20mph speed limits.

13. REQUESTS FOR REPORTS TO BE INCLUDED ON THE NEXT AVAILABLE AGENDA

Councillor Mrs A. Blackman requested an update report in respect of the proposed Waste Transfer Station at Ty Dyffryn.

14. DEMOGRAPHIC OVERVIEW OF CCBC LEISURE CENTRE USERS

Following a Member's request, this report was brought forward from the list of information items as an item for discussion.

The report provided Members with an overview of visitor numbers and demographics for customers accessing CCBC leisure centres. The report was prepared following a Member's request at the Regeneration and Environment Scrutiny Committee meeting of 30th June 2015.

A Member raised a query in respect of user demographics for each leisure centre. Officers explained that the request had been made for the age profile of all leisure centre users across the county borough, and not individual locations. Reference was made by a Member to a recent Cabinet decision to offer for sale a piece of land located near a leisure centre (land adjacent to Cefn Fforest Leisure Centre). It was noted that this decision had been ratified by Cabinet and in referring to an email which had been sent by the Director of Education and Community Services to the Scrutiny Committee (outlining the scope of how Leisure Services will be considered by the Committee over the next 12 months) the Chair deemed that there would be no further discussion on the matter that evening.

15. INFORMATION ITEMS

The Committee noted the following items for information, full details of which were included within the Officers reports. None of the remaining items were brought forward for review.

- (1) Bryn Compost Liaison Group Minutes – 12th May 2015;
- (2) Voluntary Sector Liaison Committee Minutes – 17th June 2015;
- (3) Bargoed Town Centre Management Group Minutes – 3rd June 2015;
- (4) Blackwood Town Centre Management Group Minutes – 5th June 2015;
- (5) Caerphilly Town Centre Management Group Minutes – 9th June 2015;
- (6) Risca Town Centre Management Group Minutes – 30th June 2015;
- (7) Ystrad Mynach Town Centre Management Group Minutes – 14th July 2015;
- (8) Summary of Members' Attendance – Quarter 1 – 15th May 2015 to 30th June 2015;
- (9) Regeneration and Environment Scrutiny Committee Forward Work Programme.

The meeting closed at 7.26 pm.

Approved as a correct record and subject to any amendments or corrections agreed and recorded in the minutes of the meeting held on 27th October 2015, they were signed by the Chair.

CHAIR