



REGENERATION AND ENVIRONMENT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD AT PENALLTA HOUSE, YSTRAD MYNACH ON
TUESDAY, 28TH JUNE 2016 AT 5.30 P.M.

PRESENT:

Councillor D.T. Davies - Chair
Councillor Mrs E.M. Aldworth - Vice-Chair

Councillors:

M. Adams, J. Bevan, Mrs A. Blackman, C.J. Cuss, C. Elsbury, S. Kent, Mrs P. Marsden,
M.J. Prew, A. Rees

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. Harray (Corporate Director – Communities), T. Shaw (Head of Engineering Services), M.S.
Williams (Head of Community and Leisure Services), G. Parry (Highway Operations Group
Manager), J. Reynolds (Sports and Leisure Facilities Manager), C. Forbes-Thompson (Interim
Head of Democratic Services), L. Lane (Solicitor) and R. Barrett (Committee Services Officer)

Also present:

Councillor C.J. Gordon

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors R.W. Gough, Mrs P. Leonard, Mrs D.
Price and Mrs E. Stenner.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

3. MINUTES – 17TH MAY 2016

Subject to it being noted that Councillor S. Kent had given his apologies for the meeting but
these had not been recorded, it was

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Regeneration and Environment Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 17th May 2016 (minute nos. 1 – 9) be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

4. CALL-IN PROCEDURE

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

5. REPORT OF THE CABINET MEMBERS

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

Councillor T.J. Williams (Cabinet Member for Highways, Transportation and Engineering) presented his report and outlined a number of developments across the Engineering Services Division, including details of the current road and footway re-surfacing programmes. The Scrutiny Committee were informed of Winter Service Plan arrangements and the Cabinet Member outlined his intention for a Winter Maintenance Seminar to be held for Members in Autumn 2016. Members were provided with details of the Highway Inspection Manual, and Highway Asset Management Plan, which are due to be presented to the Scrutiny Committee and Cabinet over the coming months, and were updated on the latest developments in respect of the City Deal.

A Member queried the impact of the recent EU Referendum outcome on the current City Deal proposals. Officers confirmed that approximately £160m of EU funding had been allocated to the South Wales Metro scheme (which forms part of these proposals) and that the Council are due to hold discussions with Welsh Government and other authorities in the near future regarding the implications of this funding shortfall.

Councillor N. George (Cabinet Member for Community and Leisure Services) provided a verbal update regarding recent sporting events across the county borough. He explained that he recently attended two football festivals organised by Sports Caerphilly to coincide with the start of the Euro 2016 tournament. Both events were held at the Centre for Sporting Excellence in Ystrad Mynach and over 700 children from schools across the county borough took part. Reference was also made to the recent Caerphilly 10K running event and Members placed on record their thanks to Council staff for the professional way in which the event had been organised.

Councillor K. James (Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Planning) reported that he recently attended the Young Enterprise Wales Final in Cardiff in June 2016, where a team of students from Coleg Gwent's Crosskeys Campus won the prestigious Team of the Year Award. The team created the business "Crumlin Crafters" which produce a variety of homemade ceramic decorative items. Members congratulated the winning team and noted that the students would be invited to a future meeting of Council in recognition of their achievement.

The Cabinet Members were thanked for their reports.

6. REGENERATION AND ENVIRONMENT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME

Cath Forbes-Thompson (Interim Head of Democratic Services) presented the report, which outlined details of the Regeneration and Environment Scrutiny Committee Forward Work Programme (FWP). A copy of the report was made available at the meeting.

Members were advised that the draft FWP includes all reports identified at a Scrutiny Committee workshop on 29th March 2016 and the meeting held on 17th May 2016 and outlines the reports planned for the period June 2016 to April 2017.

Members were asked to consider the draft FWP alongside the Cabinet Work Programme as appended to the report and to suggest any changes prior to it being finalised and published on the Council's website. It was explained that Scrutiny Committee will review this FWP at every meeting going forward alongside any changes to the Cabinet Work Programme or report requests. It was agreed that a report relating to Gully Cleaning be placed on the Members' Portal as an information item.

Consideration was then given to a report request for a review of Replacement Bin Charges. Councillor C.J. Gordon addressed the Scrutiny Committee and outlined the reasons for his request. Arising from the course of the ensuing debate, it was agreed that a report be prepared in relation to this matter and scheduled for the Regeneration and Environment Scrutiny Committee meeting on 13th December 2016.

It was agreed that subject to the foregoing amendments, the final version of the Forward Work Programme be published on the Council's website.

7. 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.

8. WALES AUDIT OFFICE REVIEW OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF A SPORT AND LEISURE STRATEGY

The report updated the Scrutiny Committee on the outcome of a recent Wales Audit Office (WAO) review of the development of a Sport and Leisure Strategy and the next steps to be taken by the Council in addressing the recommendations made by the WAO.

Members were reminded of two reports previously considered at Scrutiny Committee: Strategic Review of Leisure Facilities (28th October 2014) and Strategic Review of Outdoor Recreation Facilities (31st March 2015). Both of these reports summarised work that had been completed in undertaking a robust assessment of the facilities across the Authority and setting a strategic vision for the provision of facilities in the future. The latter review also progressed to Cabinet where the review recommendations were agreed.

In the final quarter of 2015/16, the WAO held discussions with Caerphilly County Borough Council and included a review of Sports and Leisure Services in its 2015/16 programme of work with the Council. The scope of the review was limited to "the development of a Sport and Leisure Strategy" and consequently did not examine the wider aspects of Sports and Leisure Services such as regional working, National Exercise Referral, outdoor adventures/education and sports development. A final report was published by the WAO in May 2016, (appended to the Scrutiny Committee report) which sets out the recommendations in the WAO Report and the Authority's next steps.

To build on the substantial review work already undertaken and in response to the WAO findings, the development of the Sport and Leisure Strategy has been designated as one of the 13 Improving Services Programmes which are subject to formal project management arrangements and regular reporting to the new Improving Services Programme (ISP) Board. The Board has agreed to the appointment of a Consultant to review all existing plans, strategies, policies and other documents and to work with key Authority personnel in developing an over-arching Sport and Leisure Strategy for the Council. In addition, the ISP Project Team has developed a brief for the ISP Board, and the timescales were appended to the Scrutiny Committee report in draft form. Developments are at an early stage and future updates will be provided to the ISP Board and Scrutiny Committee upon completion of the consultancy work.

During the course of the ensuing debate, a Member queried varying consultancy costs detailed within the Officer's report and the ISP Project Brief. Officers explained that these costs have now been finalised as being in the region of £4,500 + VAT. It was also confirmed that the ISP Project Team will comprise of senior staff from Community and Leisure Services and Corporate Services, and that Corporate Management Team have involvement with the over-arching Business Improvement Board referenced in the WAO report.

Discussion took place regarding leisure centre usage and it was agreed that a previous report on this matter (Demographic Overview of CCBC Leisure Centre Users) be re-circulated to the Committee. Debate also took place regarding the services available within the Council's leisure centres and the facilities available within the private sector and Officers confirmed that this would be reviewed as part of the Sport and Leisure Strategy.

Following consideration on the report, Members noted the outcome of the Wales Audit Office review and unanimously supported the approach adopted by the Authority, which will include update reports to the Regeneration and Environment Scrutiny Committee.

9. PROPOSED NEW FEE STRUCTURE FOR ADDITIONAL SERVICES

The report sought Members' views on the introduction of a new scale of charges for additional service provision across the Community and Leisure Services division, prior to its presentation to Cabinet for approval.

The report set out new fee structures for additional services provided across the Parks and Bereavement Service and Fleet Management. It proposed that new pre-cast burial vaults for the interment of cremated remains at Bedwellty and Rhymney Cemeteries be offered for sale for a period of 50 years at an initial cost of £1498.00 per unit. The report also proposed that Class 5 (minibus) MOT tests be offered by Fleet Management at a cost of £50.00 per vehicle. These proposed charges for additional services will ensure the division has the adequate resources to deliver services and meet specific priorities in light of the Council's Medium Term Financial Plan.

Members sought clarification on the £505.00 interment fee for the interment of cremated remains in re-opened earthen graves, together with the 50-year period for the Grant of Exclusive Right of Burial. It was agreed that a further report on these matters would be circulated to Scrutiny Committee following the meeting, which would seek the comments of Members prior to the proposals for the new charges being presented to Cabinet.

Following consideration of the report, it was moved and seconded that the fee for Class 5 (minibus) MOT tests (Recommendation 4.9) be endorsed and that the fee for new pre-cast burial vaults (Recommendation 4.5) be endorsed in principle subject to consideration of a further report as outlined above. By a show of hands, this was unanimously agreed.

RECOMMENDED to Cabinet that subject to consideration of a further report relating to interment fees for cremated remains in re-opened earthen graves and the Grant of Exclusive Right of Burial, the proposed new charges for additional services as outlined in the report be endorsed.

10. APPORTIONMENT OF HIGHWAY MAINTENANCE BUDGET 2016/17

Consideration was given to the report, which provided details of the proposed apportionment of the highway maintenance budget for 2016/2017.

The 2016/2017 budget totals £7,630,536 and is split into the following areas: structural maintenance, safety maintenance, severe weather maintenance, street lighting, and other general maintenance. Members were advised that the street lighting budget allocation of £1,678,375, which is inclusive of £1,208,550 energy costs, should see a saving of £350,000 when compared to last year's budget to attain the MTFP (Medium Term Financial Plan) target for 2016-17. This reduction in budget consists of £190,000 of additional energy savings and £160,000 from lighting maintenance. It was explained that further energy savings can be realised if further investment could be found to replace more of the existing ageing lighting stock with LED alternate units.

Officers explained that the 2016/2017 capital budget allocation in relation to highway operations has seen an increase in allocation of £150,000 for both Vehicle Restraint Systems and Footway Reconstruction. This also includes £750,000 and £150,000, directly related to highway resurfacing and footways respectively. Full details of the budget allocations for each area, together with details of maintenance schedules and priorities for 2016/17, were appended to the report.

Members were advised that the ongoing strategy is to maximise the impact of existing funding, based on priorities, innovation and standards, whilst ensuring the safety of highway users. Although the projected MTFP savings have been deferred for this year (2016-17), highway management will be directly challenged in the coming years (2017-21) and will inevitably present challenges for officers to consider future priorities and innovative approaches to these issues. In order to try and maintain the highway to an acceptable standard, that does not compromise user safety, alternate strategies are being more widely utilised. As there will be funding challenges going forward, this will present delays or prevent the much-needed structural maintenance on all highway assets. As such it is imperative that a prioritised risk based approach to highway maintenance continues.

Discussion took place regarding maintenance of drainage systems and a Member raised concerns regarding the level of response arising from issues (such as blocked drains) being reported to the Council. Officers confirmed that they would monitor the reporting system to ensure that all service requests are appropriately actioned. Members also noted that an information report in relation to Gully Cleaning would be produced in the near future.

A Member sought clarification on the details of recent consultation on Traffic Management Priorities in their ward, and it was agreed that the relevant information would be forwarded to them. Discussion took place regarding the budget for Tips Maintenance and the requirement for further significant funding for future remediation activities, and it was confirmed that this matter would be considered by Corporate Management Team in the near future.

A Member also referred to the processes relating to the enforcement of parking restrictions (such as double yellow lines). Officers confirmed that the feasibility of transferring responsibility for civil parking enforcement duties from Gwent Police to the Council is currently being considered, and it was noted that this will be linked to the remit of the Task and Finish Group established to consider the operation and management of Highway-owned Council Car Parks.

Following consideration of the report, Members noted its contents and the proposed interventions detailed in order to maximise service standards from the allocated highway maintenance budget for 2016/17.

11. WINTER SERVICE PLAN ENDORSEMENT

The report outlined the background and content of the Council's Winter Service Plan and explained the process by which it is reviewed on an annual basis. The report sought Members' comments on the Winter Service Plan's process and key areas, prior to its presentation to Cabinet for approval.

It was explained that the Winter Service Plan has existed since the inception of CCBC and sets out the Council's responsibilities for maintaining the highway infrastructure network during the winter maintenance period. The Plan is annually reviewed by Members and Officers, with a four-week period dedicated to this process. Feedback and amendments are incorporated into the final version, which is then circulated to appropriate parties and placed on the Council's website in October.

Members were advised that it was envisaged this process would continue for 2016-2017 winter season after the Cabinet endorsement process had been completed.

A number of sections were highlighted as requiring review by Scrutiny Members as they cover key issues within the Winter Service Plan, these being 'Gritting Route and Road Hierarchy', 'Salt Stocks and Location', 'Weather Forecasting' and 'Salt Bin Request Process'. A copy of the current Winter Service Plan for 2015-16 was appended to the report as an example of the draft Winter Service Plan for 2016-17 (on which consultation will be based).

During the course of the ensuing debate, Officers responded to general queries in respect of gritting routes and operational locations, and outlined weather forecasting measures that are utilised in making the appropriate decisions for a freezing or weather event. Members were advised of the communication processes between the Council and other agencies (such as funeral directors and farmers) to facilitate the gritting of essential routes during periods of inclement weather. Discussion also took place regarding requests for the supply and refilling of grit bins within the county borough.

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

RECOMMENDED to Cabinet that the draft Winter Service Plan be endorsed.

The meeting closed at 7.20 p.m.

Approved as a correct record and subject to any amendments or corrections agreed and recorded in the minutes of the meeting held on 20th September 2016, they were signed by the Chair.

CHAIR