



REGENERATION AND ENVIRONMENT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD AT PENALLTA HOUSE, YSTRAD MYNACH ON
TUESDAY, 14TH FEBRUARY 2017 AT 5.30 P.M.

PRESENT:

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

Councillors:

M.A. Adams, J. Bevan, C.J. Cuss, N. Dix, C. Elsbury, R.W. Gough, L. Harding, S. Kent,
Mrs A. Leonard, Mrs P. Leonard, P.A. Marsden, Mrs E. Stenner

Cabinet Members:

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

Together with:

C. HARRY (Corporate Director - Communities), D. Whetter (Principal Engineer), M. Eedy (Finance Manager – Environment Directorate), M. Lloyd (WHQS and Infrastructure Strategy Manager), T. McMahon (Community Regeneration Manager), G. Parry (Highway Operations Group Manager), E. Sullivan (Scrutiny Officer), L. Lane (Corporate Solicitor) and R. Barrett (Committee Services Officer)

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors M.J. Prew and Mrs D. Price.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

3. MINUTES - 13TH DECEMBER 2016

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Regeneration and Environment Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 13th December 2016 (minute nos. 1 - 14) be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

4. MINUTES - 19TH DECEMBER 2016

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Special Regeneration and Environment Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 19th December 2016 (minute nos. 1 - 13) 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 Councillors T.J. Williams, N. George and Councillor K. James, which had been circulated to Members in advance of the meeting.

Councillor N. George (Cabinet Member for Community and Leisure Services) referred to the debate at a recent Scrutiny Committee meeting surrounding replacement waste container charges and the feasibility of offering second-hand stock at a discounted price. Following a subsequent meeting between the Cabinet Member, the Scrutiny Committee Chair and relevant Officers, it has now been confirmed that these replacement containers will be offered to residents at a cost of £10 each. This limited stock (which is of a refurbished standard) will be offered to residents on a first come first serve basis and the offer will be advertised on the Council's website. In response to a query regarding ownership of household waste containers, it was confirmed that this information would be circulated to Members following the meeting.

The Scrutiny Committee were also informed of the success of Council volunteers at the annual Pride in Your Place Awards, the Caerphilly Adventures Awards and the annual Sport Caerphilly Awards, and were pleased to note these achievements.

The report from Councillor K. James (Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Planning and Sustainable Development) outlined developments within Business Support and Funding (including the opening of the new IG Doors factory at Oakdale Business Park and a new manufacturing investment at Penyfan Industrial Estate). The Cabinet Member provided an update in respect of Community Regeneration and outlined grant funding opportunities across of Urban Renewal, Town Centre Management and Countryside and Landscape Services. The report also referred to the high visitor numbers that have been reported across tourism venues, seasonal events and country parks.

Discussion took place regarding the collaborative regional project entitled "Business Enterprise and Innovation", which is due to be considered by Cabinet on 15th February 2017. This opportunity would see the expansion of the Lawns Industrial Estate in Rhymney as the Council's preferred submission for the regional bid. It was confirmed that an update on this matter would be provided when available. A Member also sought information regarding the breakdown of income across individual tourism venues and it was agreed that this information would be circulated following the meeting.

The report from Councillor T.J. Williams (Cabinet Member for Highways, Transportation and Engineering) provided an update on the procurement process for the next Wales and Borders Rail Franchise and the South Wales Metro rail service. The report also outlined enhancement works at Lansbury Park, together with processes that are being used to resource the Council's winter maintenance service in a more effective way.

Members expressed the need for improved rail commuter links (including the extension of local railway lines into Newport) and for the frequency of train routes to be increased. Assurances were given that consideration will be given to these matters when the Council

identifies its priorities for the Metro as part of the Cardiff Capital Region City Deal, and that the Council is continuing to liaise with Network Rail in regards to the signalling works which will allow the Ebbw Vale route to be extended into Newport. Members were encouraged to respond to the public consultation which will be launched shortly to seek views on rail service delivery.

The Cabinet Members were thanked for their reports.

7. COMMUNITIES FIRST – VERBAL UPDATE

It was agreed by the Scrutiny Committee that this item be moved forward on the agenda.

Tina McMahon (Community Regeneration Manager), together with Dave Whetter (Principal Engineer) presented a verbal update on current Welsh Government (WG) developments in relation to the Communities First programme and the potential impact on Communities First funding across the county borough.

Members were advised of the recent announcement from WG that the Communities First programme will be phased out by March 2018, with a new cross-government, all-Wales approach being developed to deal with the root causes of poverty. This decision follows a broad period of engagement with Communities First staff, community members and supporting partners and stakeholders across Wales.

Funding at 70% of current levels will be provided to the Communities First programme until March 2018. Following the cessation of this funding, WG will introduce a range of budgets to support the programme's most effective projects and protect valuable community assets. It is estimated that this will equate to around £1m per annum for each local authority across Wales.

In terms of the impact on the Communities First programme within the county borough, it was explained that the four Caerphilly clusters currently have a combined £2.9m grant allocation and employ 63 staff in total (with 49 of these directly employed by the local authority). A Member queried whether WG will give consideration to population and deprivation factors when awarding budgets in future years. Officers explained that this is currently unclear as there will be a fundamental shift in the approach toward tackling poverty, and that it is very early days in terms of assessing the impact of these changes and how the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act will be incorporated into any new approach.

The impact of these developments on staff morale was acknowledged, and in a response to a Member's query regarding notice periods, Officers outlined the options that would be considered in accordance with the Council's HR policies if a redundancy situation were to arise following the programme end. Discussion also took place regarding a recent lack of Partnership Cluster meetings (comprising of the four Communities First clusters across the county borough) and Officers confirmed that they would encourage the relevant parties to hold a meeting in the near future in view of the announcement from WG.

The Scrutiny Committee thanked the Officers for the update and noted the details of the current position in respect of the Communities First Programme.

8. REGENERATION AND ENVIRONMENT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME

Emma Sullivan (Scrutiny Officer) presented the report, which outlined details of the Regeneration and Environment Scrutiny Committee Forward Work Programme (FWP).

Members were advised that the FWP includes all reports identified at the Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 13th December 2016 and outlines the reports planned for the period

February 2017 to July 2017. Members were asked to consider the 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 agreed that a Consultation on Telecommunications Masts report be scheduled for 4th July 2017, and that the Active Travel Integrated Plan be scheduled for 19th September 2017. Additionally, it was agreed that the Annual Summary of Town Centre Management Group Activities be placed on the Members' Portal as an information item and that the title of the Inspection of Coal Tips report scheduled for 28th March 2017 be amended to read "Tips Maintenance – Briefing Note".

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

9. 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.

10. GWENT POLICE POLICIES PRIORITIES AND RESOURCE REQUIREMENTS ASSOCIATED WITH SPEED AND PARKING ENFORCEMENT - CHIEF CONSTABLE JEFF FARRAR

The Scrutiny Committee noted that the Chief Constable for Gwent Police (Mr Jeff Farrar) was unable to attend the meeting due to an external operational matter, and it was agreed that the item be withdrawn from the agenda.

11. LED LIGHTING FEEDBACK REPORT

Marcus Lloyd (Deputy Head of Programmes) and Graham Parry (Highway Operations Group Manager) presented the report, which reviewed the impact of recent investment to replace street lighting stock with LED (light emitting diode) lighting, and sought the views of the Scrutiny Committee on the feedback and outcomes arising from the installation of this new lighting technology.

Members were reminded of the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) proposals for street lighting energy savings of £450k between 2015-16 and 2016-17, with it intended for these to be achieved via a combination of part-night lighting measures and a £980k capital investment in LED replacement gear-tray technology.

There have been significant benefits arising from these changes, particularly in terms of energy reduction, environmental savings and financial savings. The installation of LED replacements achieved £96k up to March 2016, and an additional £190k in energy savings is forecast by the end of March 2017. Further information relating to the impact of these changes was detailed within the report. Any comments and complaints received during the installation process (around 100 over the last 13 months) have been logged and responded to accordingly, and mainly relate to the LED units being either too bright or too dim. Accident figures for night-time collisions for the first six months following installation of the LED gear-trays show a slight increase from the five year average and will be examined further when a full twelve-month set of data becomes available. Local crime figures provided by Gwent Police show no noticeable increase in crime following the installation of LED gear-tray lighting in September 2015.

It was noted that a local resident (Mr Collier) had been due to present his views on the Officer's report and the impact of the street lighting changes, but was subsequently unable to attend the meeting. A letter from Mr Collier was tabled to the Scrutiny Committee in his absence. Members noted the contents of the letter, which included concerns regarding a loss as to the area of luminance projected onto pavements by the new LED street lights (compared to the older sodium lights) and the possible effect on public safety. Officers explained that testing has been carried out on the new lighting within residential estates and that luminance levels are in accordance with the required technical standard. It was agreed that Officers would respond to Mr Collier to address the comments raised in his letter to the Committee.

Discussion took place regarding the street lighting changes and several Members relayed comments received from local residents in regards to the new LED lighting. It was noted that some residents perceive the new lights as being dimmer, whilst others prefer the newer style owing to a resulting reduction in light pollution. Members were encouraged to feed back to Officers any queries or comments regarding the changes, and the Scrutiny Committee acknowledged the level of savings that had been achieved to date. Discussion also took place regarding further funding to continue the LED conversion programme across the Council's remaining street lighting stock and Officers confirmed that future investment strategies are currently being examined.

Following consideration and discussion of the report, it was moved and seconded that the following recommendations be supported. By a show of hands, this was unanimously agreed.

RESOLVED that for the reasons contained in the Officer's report: -

- (i) the impact of the investment in respect of the street lighting changes and the current methods of measuring and monitoring the energy savings for future phases of LED street lighting conversion, be noted;
- (ii) the current approach taken for both light pollution and maintenance aspects when implementing the LED conversions be noted;
- (iii) the data and processing of public responses within the report, and the current processes used when implementing LED street lighting conversion, be noted;
- (iv) it be noted that the current accident and crime figures show no significant change with the introduction of urban LED street lighting and that further data will be required to more accurately assess any possible effects of LED street lighting.

12. BUDGET MONITORING REPORT 2016/2017

Mike Eedy (Finance Manager – Environment Directorate) presented the report, which outlined the most recent budget monitoring position for 2016/2017 for the Environment Directorate service divisions, namely Regeneration and Planning, Engineering Services, Public Protection and Community and Leisure Services.

It was explained that the most recent projections for 2016/2017 are based on the latest available financial information. Projected outturn figures for the financial year are compared with the budget to show anticipated under/overspends, with more detailed budget monitoring figures outlined within the report and its appendices. As part of the need to apply further budget efficiency savings in 2016/2017 to meet Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) targets and achieve budget strategy aims, the Environment Directorate were targeted to achieve new budget efficiency savings of £2.850m. The most recent figures indicated a total underspend of £365k, but exclusive of ring-fenced budgets this underspend is increased to £426k. Members were advised that the budget for Community and Leisure Services now includes £800k corporate funding approved by Cabinet on 16th November 2016 to support ongoing financial pressures and overspend in relation to dry recycling treatment.

The Scrutiny Committee were referred to the key underspends and overspends across each service area as contained in the report, with the reasons for any significant variations within individual departments summarised to Members. The report also included an update in respect of the targeted MTFP savings of £2.85m for the Environment Directorate for 2016/2017. It was explained that most savings have been achieved or will be achieved by the end of the financial year, which have been reflected in the report. However, there are some targets that may require further review and monitoring as they may not be fully achieved during 2016/2017. These include shortfalls in respect of underachieving income targets for industrial properties and Cwmcarn Visitor Centre, passenger transport, catering breakfast clubs, and the Parks Service.

Discussion took place regarding a shortfall in car park income (£34k), and Officers explained that this income contributes towards the general maintenance of the Council's car parks and capital expenditure investment, and can be a difficult area to forecast. A Member queried whether the underspend within Cemeteries would be utilised for the building of the new cemetery in Caerphilly. Officers explained that the cemetery will be funded via a combination of capital budget and reserve funding sources.

The Scrutiny Committee noted the continuing pressures across Community and Leisure Services, particularly in relation to the dry recycling treatment budget across Waste Management and Cleansing. Members were advised that this is partially due to ongoing cost issues in respect of the recycling and treatment of contaminated waste, and discussion took place on the procurement processes relating to this matter. There have also been overspends in relation to residual waste treatment and civic amenity sites arising from increased waste tonnage, and these are continuing to be closely monitored. There are also challenges across Leisure Services due to the increased combined income target across Leisure Centres, which will also be closely monitored as income generation is subject to variation depending on customer demand

Having given due consideration to the report, Members noted its contents, together with details of the budget monitoring position contained within the appendices.

The meeting closed at 7.02 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 28th March 2017, they were signed by the Chair.

CHAIR