



REGENERATION AND ENVIRONMENT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD AT PENALLTA HOUSE, YSTRAD MYNACH ON TUESDAY, 17TH FEBRUARY 2015 AT 5.30 P.M.

PRESENT:

Councillor D.T. Davies - Chair

Councillors:

Mrs A. Blackman, J. Bevan, C.J. Cuss, R.T. Davies, C. Elsbury, Ms J.G. Jones, S. Kent, Mrs P. Leonard, Mrs D. Price, A. Rees, Mrs E. Stenner

Cabinet Members:

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

Together with:

S. Aspinall (Acting Deputy Chief Executive), R. Hartshorn (Head of Public Protection), C. Forbes-Thompson (Scrutiny Research Officer) and R. Barrett (Committee Services Officer)

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Mrs E.M. Aldworth, N. Dix, R.W. Gough and M.J. Prew.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

3. MINUTES – 1ST DECEMBER 2014

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Special Regeneration and Environment Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 1st December 2014 (minute nos. 1 – 3) be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

4. MINUTES – 9TH DECEMBER 2014

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Regeneration and Environment Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 9th December 2014 (minute nos. 1 – 11) be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

5. CONSIDERATION OF ANY MATTER REFERRED TO THIS COMMITTEE IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE 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 reports from Cabinet Members D.V. Poole, T.J. Williams and K. James.

Councillor D.V. Poole, Cabinet Member for Community and Leisure Services, advised Members that Keep Wales Tidy had recently highlighted cigarette-related litter as an issue for the Authority. A programme of targeted enforcement work was carried out by Enforcement Officers in response to this issue, with 16 fixed penalty notices issued during a week of targeted enforcement activity in January 2015. During March and April 2015, enforcement activity will be prioritised around dog fouling issues within the Authority.

Members were advised of a recent Welsh under-18s international football tournament held at the Centre of Sporting Excellence in Ystrad Mynach. The Football Association of Wales (FAW) were very impressed with the facility, which will be hosting a further similar tournament in February. The Authority has also managed to attract interest from Cardiff City Ladies Football Club who will use the Centre as their playing base.

The Cabinet Member recently visited the GP exercise referral programme held at Caerphilly Leisure Centre and was extremely impressed by the quality of the provision and the skills of the staff involved. It was explained that exercise referral is funded by the Welsh Government through the Local Health Board, with 281 patients in the county borough referred from their GP and a further 86 on a waiting list for the programme. The Authority is therefore doing its best to secure more funding for the programme. The Cabinet Member highlighted the issues surrounding the funding and the benefits of the programme.

Members were updated on developments regarding bowling green provision as part of the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) proposals. It was explained that following a meeting with all bowls clubs in the county borough, Officers have been liaising with other local authorities who have taken various decisions in relation to bowling green provision and maintenance. Officers will shortly be composing a number of savings proposals for the Authority to consider in relation to bowling green provision, which will be brought to the Regeneration and Environment Scrutiny Committee for discussion.

Discussion took place regarding bowling green provision and bowls clubs and the Cabinet Member confirmed that it was anticipated that such savings proposals would be presented for consideration as part of the MTFP for 2016/17. It was explained that the Authority were currently waiting to view the outcome of decisions taken by other local authorities, before proceeding with options for consideration. The Cabinet Member outlined the complex consultation process to date, and explained that the management situation of each club varied across the county borough. The Cabinet Member confirmed that further detailed discussions would be carried out with all bowling clubs to establish their views in relation to possible options for future bowling green provision.

Councillor T.J. Williams, Cabinet Member for Highways, Transportation and Engineering, presented his report, and advised Members of current and future street lighting spending additions. £250,000 of Local Government Borrowing Initiative (LGBI) funding secured in 2014/15 will achieve £22,500 in energy savings per year, by installing LED lights in 900 streetlights. It is anticipated that further funding of £980,000 in 2015/2016 will be secured, which will achieve £275,000 energy savings per year by installing LED lights in 7500 streetlights.

A number of public exhibitions have recently been held with regards to the proposed A468 Pwlllypant Roundabout Improvement Works. The proposal, which include the signalisation of this heavily trafficked junction, was met with positive feedback and generally welcomed by the public. Members were also informed that the Local Transport Plan (LTP) was recently approved by Council and has been submitted to Welsh Government for comment. Depending on the comments received from Welsh Government there may be a need for some minor changes, with the final version expected to be made available by April 2015.

Members sought an update on the proposed highway improvements for the A469 New Tredegar to Pontlottyn road. It was confirmed that this scheme was awaiting Welsh Government funding, and that Members would be kept informed of progress on this matter.

Councillor K. James, Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Planning and Sustainable Development, presented his report, and informed Members of progress on the first revision of the Local Development Plan (LDP) with the first statutory public consultation exercise currently underway. The Cabinet Member explained that the purpose of this consultation is to seek stakeholders' views on the level and location of growth up to 2031. He emphasised that at this stage the public are not being consulted on the detailed plan, but on the Preferred Strategy that will underpin the LDP moving forward.

This Preferred Strategy consultation highlights the sites submitted to the Council for consideration for development and are contained in the Candidate Sites Register, which indicates those sites that meet the Council's Preferred Strategy for growth. The formal opportunity for stakeholders and the public to comment on the Candidate Sites is during this six-week public consultation period. The Cabinet Member explained that consultation on the detailed plan (the Deposit Stage) is scheduled to take place at the end of 2015.

Members were also informed of ongoing regeneration works within Newbridge Town Centre, with work to the cultural hub of Newbridge Memo nearing completion and an opening concert scheduled for 21st February 2015. 'Phase 3' of the Newbridge Regeneration Programme works are underway and will include the continuation of public realm enhancements, and the development of a 'Riverside Park', following a public exhibition of the plans in October 2014. These works are scheduled for completion in Summer 2015. The Cabinet Member also referenced a recent fire in Newbridge Town Centre which saw the destruction of two businesses, and confirmed that subsequent demolition works were unlikely to impact on the regeneration works schedule.

Discussion took place regarding the series of exhibitions arranged as part of the LDP public consultation exercise and Members commented on the content and planned locations for these exhibitions. The Cabinet Member reiterated that at this stage, consultation was only taking place on the Preferred Strategy, which outlines the overall vision, aims and objectives for the Local Development Plan. Comments were received from Members regarding the Preferred Strategy Representation Form that could be completed as part of the consultation process. Discussion also took place regarding planning applications and the impact of the LDP on the planning process.

In response to a Member's query, the Cabinet Member confirmed that Jan Bennett (Group Manager Business Enterprise Support) had recently retired from the Authority. Members requested that their appreciation for Jan's efforts and support be placed on record, and wished her a long and happy retirement.

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. PUBLIC PROTECTION ENFORCEMENT STRATEGY

The report was presented by Rob Hartshorn, Head of Public Protection, and sought the views of Members on a revised Public Protection Enforcement Policy, prior to its presentation to Cabinet.

It was explained that the Public Protection Division has a major regulatory role in protecting the environment and ensuring a safe, healthy and prosperous community for citizens, business and visitors. This role includes the enforcement of numerous statutes, many of which include criminal and other sanctions on those who infringe the law. In order to ensure a fair and consistent approach to their enforcement responsibilities, the Public Protection Division developed an Enforcement Policy, which was last approved in 2011. However, due to the implementation of the Regulators Code in 2014 and a number of other changes to legislation, sanctions and powers, an update was now required to the existing Public Protection Enforcement Policy.

The Head of Public Protection outlined the changes within the revised Policy, which was attached at Appendix 1 to the report. It was explained that the Enforcement Options section of the existing Policy has been expanded and updated in a number of areas. The Policy will be reviewed annually with a report on compliance and enforcement action submitted to the relevant Scrutiny Committee. Once approved, the Policy will be bilingual, published on the Council's website and be made available in hard copy and other formats. In addition, Service Standards (attached as Appendix 2 to the report) have also been established in line with the Regulators' Code and The Better Regulation Delivery Office (BRDO) toolkit and will be published on the Council's website.

Discussion of the report ensued and Officers responded to general queries regarding enforcement options, processes and principles contained within the revised Policy. A query was raised regarding the sustainability of the revised Policy if staffing levels reduced in future years, and it was confirmed that the Public Protection Division would prioritise the delivery of regulatory functions accordingly. Officers also clarified procedures relating to cost recovery and shared enforcement roles with other agencies and authorities.

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 for the reasons outlined in the report, the revised Public Protection Enforcement Policy be approved.

9. GWENT TRADING STANDARDS PROJECT

Rob Hartshorn, Head of Public Protection, outlined the report, which presented a Business Case for the establishment of a Regional Trading Standards Service across the five Gwent Local Authorities, with Caerphilly as the lead authority. The views of Members were sought on the report, prior to its presentation to Cabinet.

It was explained that the Business Case had been developed on the basis of a number of assumptions relating to financial and funding considerations. However, for various reasons, these assumptions had not been fulfilled. Following these developments, an analysis of the situation established three options, and these were outlined to Members:-

1. Option 1 - do nothing;
2. Option 2 - proceed with the Business Case and establish a Gwent Trading Standards Service;
3. Option 3 - explore other opportunities for collaboration.

In view of the reasons outlined within the report, the proposal to establish a Gwent Trading Standards Service in accordance with the Business Case (Option 2) was not recommended to Members. The report recommended that an alternative option of exploring other opportunities for collaboration be explored (Option 3).

Discussion of the report ensued, and Officers responded to general queries regarding the contents of the Business Case. Officers outlined the rationale behind the recommendation to support Option 3, in that should any other opportunities be identified that offer benefits to Caerphilly County Borough Council, then these should be properly considered. Members raised concerns regarding timescales and funding considerations associated with this option. Officers also confirmed that the Gwent Trading Standards Project had come to an end.

Following consideration of the report, it was moved and seconded that Option 2 be not pursued. By a show of hands this was unanimously agreed. It was then moved and seconded that Option 1 (do nothing) be supported rather than Option 3 (explore other opportunities for collaboration). An amendment was moved and seconded that Option 3 be endorsed. By a show of hands and a majority vote, the amendment was declared lost. By a further show of hands and a majority vote, the motion to support Option 1 was carried.

RECOMMENDED to Cabinet that for the reasons contained in the report and explained at the meeting, Options 2 and 3 be not pursued and that Option 1 be supported and, as such, the status quo in regards to the Trading Standards service be maintained.

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

The following requests were received:-

1. Councillor Mrs A. Blackman requested a report on car parking charges in town centres and information relating to revenue and income.
2. Councillor A. Rees raised a query regarding the payment process between Communities First and voluntary organisations. It was advised that this was an accountancy matter and that Sandra Aspinall and Pauline Elliott could be approached to assist in resolving any issues.

11. INFORMATION ITEMS

The Committee noted the following items for information, full details of which were included within the Officers reports. There were no items brought forward for review.

- (1) Budget Monitoring and Trading Account Report 2014/2015;
- (2) Play Sufficiency;
- (3) Town Centre Improvement Group 2014;
- (4) Bryn Compost Liaison Group Minutes – 25th September 2014;

- (5) Grants to the Voluntary Sector Panel Minutes – 26th November 2014;
- (6) Voluntary Sector Liaison Committee Minutes – 3rd December 2014
- (7) Ystrad Mynach Town Centre Management Group Minutes – 25th November 2014;
- (8) Summary of Members Attendance – Quarter 3 – 1st October 2014 to 31st December 2014.

The meeting closed at 6.46 pm.

Approved as a correct record and subject to any amendments or corrections agreed and recorded in the minutes of the meeting held on 31st March 2015, they were signed by the Chair.

CHAIR