



REGENERATION AND ENVIRONMENT (PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT) SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD AT PENALLTA HOUSE, YSTRAD MYNACH
ON TUESDAY, 17TH JULY 2013 AT 5.00 P.M.**

PRESENT:

Councillor D.T. Davies - Chairman

Councillors:

Mrs. A. Blackman, C.J. Cuss, C. Elsbury, R.W. Gough, Ms. J.G. Jones, S. Kent, M.J. Prew, Mrs. D. Price and Mrs E. Stenner.

Cabinet Members: D.T. Hardacre (Performance and Asset Management).
T. Williams (Highways, Transportation and Engineering)
K. James (Regeneration, Planning and Sustainable Development)

Together with:

S. Aspinall (Acting Deputy Chief Executive), K. Peters (Community Safety Manager), M.S. Williams (Head of Community and Leisure Services), L. Howse (Performance Management Officer), I. Raymond (Performance Management Officer), A. Bolter (Group Manager, Economic Development), D. Phenis (Sports and Leisure Services Manager), P. Rossiter (Energy and Water Officer), P. Cooke (Sustainable Development Manager), J. Jones (Democratic Services Manager), E. Sullivan (Democratic Services Officer)

CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENT

The Chairman apologised and advised Members that due to a prior commitment he needed to leave the meeting early. As an apology had been received from the Vice Chairman nominations were taken from the floor for a Chair. It was proposed and seconded that Councillor Mrs D. Price take the Chair and by a show of hands this was unanimously agreed.

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Mrs E. M. Aldworth, J. Bevan, R.T. Davies, N. Dix, Mrs E. Forehead, A.G. Higgs, and R. Hartshorn (Head of Public Protection)

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest made at the beginning or during the meeting.

REPORTS OF OFFICERS

Consideration was given to the following performance management reports.

3. PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT

The report detailed the four Improvement Objectives relating to the Regeneration and Environment Scrutiny Committee, summarised the progress made and asked Members to decide the level of success achieved on each.

The outcomes achieved in relation to Improvement Objective IO2, Making Caerphilly A Safer Place to Live were detailed.

Officers confirmed that an enhanced 'Victims Champion Service' had been developed providing increased levels of support to improve the quality of life for victims.

Members discussed the PACT meetings, which were noted to have varying degrees of success and attendance levels depending on the ward area. Members agreed that the organisation of the meetings needed to improve in order to address the often small numbers that attend. Officers confirmed that the PACT process would be reviewed in order to identify what elements were working and the best way to build on these going forward.

Officers confirmed the new initiatives introduced in order to meet IO2. These included Junior Community Safety Warden schemes in primary schools, the extension of 'No Cold Calling Zones', bringing the total number in the borough to 33 and targeted multi-agency problem solving initiatives being implemented. Members were advised that changes to legislation restricted the number of underage test purchases for alcohol taking place. Any test purchase request must be backed up by evidence of the concerns raised and approved by a Magistrates Court. It was also noted that the number of fixed penalty notices for littering and dog fouling and increased to 365 and 73 respectively compared to 136 and 59 last year.

Members welcomed the introduction of the Junior Community Safety Warden and acknowledged the positive impact that Youth Services made with regard to anti-social behaviour and agreed that they would like to see further investment in this area. Officers confirmed that a review of Youth Services had been commissioned and this would look at different ways of working in order to improve the outcomes for young people. Members requested that the outcome of the review be reported to this Committee. Members commended the work of the Dog Wardens in addressing the issue of dog fouling.

Clarification was sought in relation to the type of evidence required for a Magistrate to approve a test purchase and the procedures were confirmed. The success rate for convictions was noted as 99% and Members were asked to continue to highlight any premises of concern to Trading Standards.

Results from the Household Survey were summarised and Members were advised that 58% of responders agreed that the Authority and the Police were dealing with crime and anti-social behaviour compared to 53% in 2009.

Members noted the outcomes achieved in respect of Improvement Objective IO2.

The outcomes achieved in relation to Improvement Objective IO3, Sustain the Range of Employment Opportunities were detailed.

Officers detailed the ongoing efforts to address unemployment and economic inactivity. The performance initiatives undertaken and their impact were explained and it was noted that 186 grants had been offered through the Local Investment Fund and 77 new business had been supported, safeguarding 1130.5 jobs and creating a further 139 jobs.

Communities First Work Clubs had been established to target the long-term unemployed and the Apprenticeship Scheme/Passport Programme was noted to have supported 132 people in 2012/2013.

Members sought clarification in relation to the different grant opportunities and training programmes available. Officers outlined the support provided to local businesses through the LIF GO2, RDP and WHQS investment programmes and noted that in addition to the Passport Programme, employment skills would continue to be supported through ESF Projects, Communities First and RDP Training Grant. The work of the PREVENT 14 to19, GENESIS' and Bridges To Work projects and their target groups were detailed for Members information. Officers also detailed the assistance provided through the STEPS course and 'Essential Skills in the Workplace' which delivered skills training directly into the workplace.

At this point in the proceedings Councillor D.T. Davies left the meeting and Councillor Mrs D. Price took the Chair.

Members noted the lack of manufacturing skills training and asked if training providers were identifying gaps in the market and tailoring their programmes to match. Officers confirmed that studies had evidenced over provision in certain markets and under supply in others, however at the moment there was no specific training for manufacturing. The Authority was working with Colleges with regard to tailoring their curriculum and training provision in line with labour market demands in order to ensure what they were providing was relevant to the market place.

Clarification was sought in relation to the reduction noted in Job Seeker Allowance claimants and Officer's confirmed that not everyone that came off the allowance had gone into employment, figures did fluctuate and the data supplied from the Job Centre was not always accurate.

Clarification was sought with regard to the numbers that had dropped out of projects and it was noted that between 80-90% of those enrolled gained from the programmes with around 20% leaving before completion for a variety of reasons. A Member requested that further information on the actual number of people dropping out and Officers agreed to email the figures to all Members for information.

Clarification was sought in relation to the 77 new businesses being supported and Members requested further information of the size of business and the numbers employed. Officers agreed to email the figures to all Members for information.

Future activities were confirmed and Members noted that a Skills and Labour Force Audit would be undertaken and its findings would be used to focus and target resources and projects going forward. The Passport programme would continue to provide essential skills and the opportunities for local businesses through the WHQS programme was emphasised. The Vibrant and Viable places initiative was detailed and Officers confirmed that stage one of a £10m regeneration project proposal for the Upper Rhymney Valley had been completed and would see targeted improvements to Rhymney town centre.

Members requested that updates on the WHQS programme and the opportunities for local business be reported back to this Committee.

Members noted the outcomes achieved in respect of Improvement Objective IO3.

The outcomes achieved in relation to Improvement Objective IO5, Promote Benefits of a Health and Active Lifestyle were detailed.

Officers confirmed that Caerphilly County Borough had one of the worst health profiles in Wales with one of the highest rates for levels of obesity. Medical evidence proved that being active with a balanced diet significantly improves health and wellbeing as well as reducing health costs and improving educational attendance and attainment.

The Council looked to improve the health and wellbeing of its residents by working to increase the number of people taking up leisure activities and promote the long term health benefits of building regular activity into people's daily lives.

Members noted how targeted provision and community engagement was succeeding in increasing the number of Leisure Centre visits and were advised that membership was at its highest recorded levels with an increase of 15%, totalling 100,000 members. Free swim opportunities has increased by 7% and health promotion activities had doubled.

The officer confirmed that Caerphilly was the first local authority to achieve full Appetite for Life compliance.

The opportunities going forward were detailed and Members congratulated Leisure Services on the progress made in making leisure activities more accessible and affordable.

Members noted the outcomes achieved in relation to Improvement Objective IO5.

The outcomes achieved in relation to Improvement Objective IO8, Reduce Our Carbon Footprint and Improve our Sustainability were detailed.

Members noted the four main outcomes and Officers confirmed that reducing energy and resource consumption had been a key priority for a number of years. The reduction of the number of Caerphilly residents in fuel poverty was another key outcome and the importance of utilising successful funding bids to tackle hard to heat homes was emphasised.

In terms of performance, Officers confirmed that the 'invest to save' Local Authority Energy Fund had resulted in 1,588 tonnes/year of carbon savings. New primary schools builds had replaced old inefficient buildings and improvement works had been made in over 1500 properties. 62% of schools had achieved the Eco Schools Green Flag award and the Council continued to hold the All Wales Travel Plan Award at Gold Level.

As a result of the work done the Councils buildings were more energy efficient and sustainable, with a reduction in energy costs of £4.6m. All schools were operating in a more sustainable way and staff and pupils had an increased understanding of sustainable development and global citizenship. Significant improvements had been achieved in the energy efficiency of over 1500 homes, which resulted in some residents no longer living in fuel poverty and the environmental impact of fleet vehicles had been reduced despite increasing demands on services.

Clarification was sought in relation to the Eco Schools status and Officers confirmed the very strict criteria and evidence base that a school needed to compile in order to be accredited.

Clarification was also sought in relation to older properties that required upgrading in order to make them more energy efficient. Officers confirmed that a benchmarking exercise had been undertaken for Social Service establishments but due to the different categories of buildings, certain properties had no benchmark. However older buildings would be assessed and made as energy efficient as possible through insulation, boiler replacement or other suitable energy improvements.

Members noted the outcomes achieved in relation to Improvement Objective IO8.

The meeting closed at 6:45 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 17th September 2013, they were signed by the Chairman.

CHAIRMAN