



REGENERATION AND ENVIRONMENT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD AT PENALLTA HOUSE, YSTRAD MYNACH ON TUESDAY, 17TH JULY 2012 AT 5.00 P.M.

PRESENT:

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

Councillors:

J. Bevan, Mrs A. Blackman, C.J. Cuss, R.T. Davies, N. Dix, R.W. Gough, Ms J.G. Jones, S. Kent, M.J. Prew, Mrs. D. Price

Cabinet Member: Councillor T.J. Williams (Highways, Transportation and Engineering)

Together with:

A. O'Sullivan (Chief Executive), T. Shaw (Head of Engineering Services), M.S. Williams (Head of Public Services), C. Campbell (Transportation Engineering Manager), M. Headington (Principal Officer, Outdoor Facilities and Bereavement Services), J. Jones (Democratic Services Manager), R.J. Thomas (Committee Services Officer)

BEREAVEMENT - COUNCILLOR L.R. REES

The Chairman referred to the recent death of Councillor Les Rees and all present stood in silence as a mark of respect and extended their condolences to the bereaved family. Several Members referred to the late member's long and distinguished career in local government and paid tribute to the manner in which he had carried out his duties and to the high esteem in which he had been held.

APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors C. Elsbury, Mrs E. Forehead and A.G. Higgs.

1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

2. MINUTES

RESOLVED that the following minutes be approved as correct records and signed by the Chairman:

- (1) The Living Environment Scrutiny Committee held on 20th March 2012 (minute nos. 1 - 13, on page nos. 1 - 7);
- (2) Regeneration Scrutiny Committee held on 3rd April 2012 (minute nos. 1 - 11, on page nos. 1 - 6); and
- (3) Regeneration and Environment (Performance Management) Scrutiny Committee held on 6th June 2012 (minute nos. 1 - 8, on page nos. 1 - 4).

3. CALL-IN PROCEDURE

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

4. CABINET REPORTS

The Cabinet reports listed on the agenda had not been requested to be brought forward for review at the meeting.

5. REPORT OF THE CABINET MEMBER

Councillor T.J. Williams, Cabinet Member for Highways, Transportation and Engineering, gave a verbal report to Members and made reference to Caerphilly Challenge (to enhance the look and feel of the Authority's street scheme) and Councillor consultation on the Winter Maintenance Plan. He informed Members that CCBC was to host Road Safety Education, Training and Publicity service after four local authorities decided to bring this in-house.

An update regarding regeneration works for YYF Phases 2/4; Fothergill's Road and the Ystrad Mynach Sports Complex was given, together with information regarding funding arrangements in relation to the Local Government Borrowing Initiative; Bus Funding; Bus Service Operators Grant; and the unsuccessful YYF Phase 3 funding bid.

Notification of nominations and awards achieved within the borough were also given.

Members thanked the Cabinet Member for his presentation. The increased LTSG was welcomed but disappointment over the refusal of the YYF Phase 3 funding bid was expressed. A Member requested that further information regarding the trade of the three apprentices be distributed to Scrutiny Committee Members.

REPORTS OF OFFICERS

Consideration was given to the following reports.

6. GRAVE PERSONALISATION

The report sought guidance from Members following the presentation of a petition to full Council on the 13th March 2012, requesting that the Authority reconsider the enforcement of the "Lawn" Cemetery Policy at Bedwellty Cemetery.

Members were reminded that a cross party Task and Finish Group had considered a variety of issues facing the Bereavement Services. The Group had noted that grave personalisation caused distress to some visitors and items often impeded access and posed a potential trip hazard. An illustration of the differences between a personalised grave and a "Lawn" Cemetery was given, while the advantages of the "Lawn" Cemetery Policy was highlighted.

The Chairman welcomed Councillor L. Gardiner to the meeting, who raised concerns regarding the way in which the Policy had been introduced at Bedwellty Cemetery. In particular the level of communication from the Council and the way in which personalised items had been removed and stored. He stressed the need for all parties to meet to resolve the ill feeling within the community.

Members discussed the report and officers responded to general questions. It was noted that the “Lawn” Cemetery Policy had been successfully implemented at other cemeteries in the county borough, but that notification of the Policy’s introduction at Bedwellty had not been as extensive as it could have been.

The Chairman of the Bereavement Services Task and Finish Group described the discussions and consultations that had taken place, prior to its final report and recommendations to Cabinet. He assured the Committee that a full debate had taken place and the Group had been unanimous in its recommendations.

The Scrutiny Committee, following consideration of the report and oral presentation, recommended that further consultation on grave personalisation in Bedwellty Cemetery take place and the results be reported back to the Committee.

7. APPORTIONMENT OF HIGHWAY MAINTENANCE BUDGET 2012/2013

The report gave Members details of the proposed apportionment of the highway maintenance budget. Future challenges to the service were highlighted, in particular a reduced budget for the year ahead, rising energy costs and difficult to predictable severe weather events. Members were informed that in order to try and maintain the highway, the ongoing strategy adopted was to try and maximise planned maintenance and reduce reactive maintenance.

Members discussed the report and officers responded to general questions. Clarification was given regarding highway resurfacing priorities, the need to protect the Authority from insurance claims and the monitoring of work undertaken. The Head of Engineering Services also confirmed the level of officer liaison with utility companies prior to any works being carried out on the public highway.

A number of Members raised specific issues within their wards and they were asked to contact the Head of Engineering Services outside of the meeting. Members also requested that a list of inspectors be circulated to Committee Members and they were invited to attend an open house in Highway House (date and time to be arranged).

The Scrutiny Committee considered the proposed apportionment and strategy and noted the report.

8. REVIEW OF THE RESIDENT PERMIT PARKING POLICY

The report informed Members of the review of the Council’s Resident Permit Parking Scheme and Policy and sought support for the recommended changes.

Members were asked to note that no new schemes had been implemented since the Council’s scheme/policy was last reviewed and amended in 2006. The review and proposed changes hoped to address any constraints and make the policy more fit for purpose and responsive to residents’ parking needs.

Members discussed the report and officers responded to general questions. The Scrutiny Committee made reference to the proposed increase in the number of permits per household and sought clarification as to the way in which one could be used for visitors. Concerns were also raised over the perceived lack of parking enforcement by the Police, and the potential for

the Council to take responsibility for this activity. The Chairman and Chief Executive advised why this was not feasible.

The Scrutiny Committee considered the report and recommended to Cabinet that, for the reasons contained therein, the changes to the Council's Resident Permit Parking Scheme and Policy, detailed in Appendix 2 of the report, be approved.

9. REVIEW OF HIGHWAY AGREEMENTS FEES AND CHARGES

The report sought Members' comments on the review of fees and charges to developers for highway agreements and solicitors for non-standard/additional questions raised in connection with highway searches/agreements and the proposed levels of charges.

Charges would be reviewed annually and it was hoped that through their use, developers would be encouraged to build the new highway infrastructure in accordance with the Council's procedures.

The Scrutiny Committee considered the report and recommended to Cabinet that, for the reasons contained therein:

- (1) the existing and new items listed in Appendix 1 to the report, become the subject of a charge at the levels of cost stated within the Appendix, in line with inflationary rises as agreed in the Budget and Medium Term Financial Plan at Council; and
- (2) all of these charge levels be reviewed and revised annually, as considered appropriate, by officers.

10. COMMUTED SUMS FOR HIGHWAY MAINTENANCE

The report sought Members' comments on the principle of charging developers commuted sums for future highway maintenance and associated works was to ensure that Highway Authorities have the resources to cover the upkeep and, where appropriate, the replacement of the assets they have adopted from developers and for which the additional funding received from Welsh Government through Revenue Support Grant is insufficient.

The Scrutiny Committee considered the report and recommended to Cabinet that, for the reasons contained therein:

1. all developers entering into Highway Agreements with the Highway Authority be charged commuted sums via the legal agreements entered into for the future maintenance requirements of the works constructed by them and adopted by the Highway Authority for the costs associated with non-standard features that are not 'covered' by the Revenue Support Grant;
2. the time period to be used in calculating the commuted sums for all other items than structures should be 75 years;
3. the time period to be used in calculating the commuted sums for highway structures should remain at 150 years;
4. officers review and update, as considered necessary, the calculated commuted sums in Appendix 2 of the report annually and the need for any additional items;
5. all commuted sums monies received be retained within Engineering Services Division budgets for future expenditure on highway maintenance use and in the specific asset categories, for structures and non structures; and
6. 'standard' construction be taken to mean a 5.5 metre wide carriageway with two 2.0 metre wide footways and street lighting.

11. REQUESTS FOR AN ITEM TO BE INCLUDED ON THE NEXT AVAILABLE AGENDA

The following requests for reports to be prepared for consideration at future meetings of the Scrutiny Committee were made as follows:

- (1) Cllr J. Bevan – requested a report on the planned maintenance of gully drains.
- (2) Cllr Mrs D. Price – requested a report on civil enforcement officers.

12. INFORMATION ITEMS

The following reports were approved and noted without discussion:

- (1) Welsh Assembly Government Development Control Quarterly Survey (Jan - March 2012)
- (2) Public Facilities Grant by Welsh Government;
- (3) Caerphilly County Borough Council Heritage Lottery Fund Strategy 2012 – 2017
- (4) Revenue Budget 2012/2013: Environment Directorate;
- (5) Revenue Grants 2012/2013;
- (6) Summary of Members' Attendance – Quarter 1– 18th May 2012 to 30th June 2012;
- (7) Regeneration and Environment Scrutiny Committee Forward Work Programme;
- (8) Minutes of the Prosiect Gwyrdd Joint Scrutiny Panel held on 5th December 2011;
- (9) Minutes of the Voluntary Sector Sub-Committee held on 21st March 2012;
- (10) Minutes of the Voluntary Sector Sub-Committee held on 20th June 2012;
- (11) Minutes of the Blackwood Town Centre Management Group held on 22nd March 2012;
- (12) Minutes of the Bryn Compost Liaison Group held on 28th March 2012.

The meeting closed at 6.50 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 18th September 2012, they were signed by the Chairman.

CHAIRMAN