



**REGENERATION AND ENVIRONMENT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
(PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT)**

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD AT PENALLTA HOUSE, YSTRAD MYNACH
ON THURSDAY 15TH NOVEMBER 2012 AT 5.00 P.M.**

PRESENT:

Councillor D.T. Davies - Chairman

Councillors:

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

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

Together with:

R. Hartshorn (Head of Public Protection), M. Lloyd (Highways Operations Group Manager), D. Price (Parks and Outdoors Facilities Manager), C. Jones (Head of Performance and Property), A. Bolter (Group Manager - Strategy and Funding), D. Phenis (Sports and Leisure Services Manager), P. Cooke (Team Leader Sustainable Development and Living Environment), S. Pugh (Divisional Performance Officer), M. Davies (Genesis Co-ordinator), K. Peters (Community Safety Manager), R. Roberts (Performance Manager), I. Raymond (Performance Management Officer), C. Forbes-Thompson (Scrutiny Research Officer), H. Morgan (Senior Committee Services Officer)

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Mrs. E.M. Aldworth C. Elsbury, Mrs. E. Forehead, R.W. Gough, A.G. Higgs and S. Kent

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

3. SIX MONTHS PROGRESS UPDATE OF THE IMPROVEMENT OBJECTIVES 2012/13

Members were reminded that the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2009 requires all local authorities in Wales to set and publish a set of priorities that improve the life of citizens. These priorities are called Improvement Objectives and progress against them is reported to the public each year. The Wales Audit Office in their public "Annual Improvement Report" review and comment on how the Council set, performed and evaluated performance against these objectives.

The management of performance is used to recognise achievement, identifies where improvement may need to be made and monitors and compares performance of council priorities and other service delivery. The role of the scrutiny committee is to scrutinise the targets that have been set against the actual targets, to recognise those that have been achieved, to hold local decision makers and policy makers to account and to challenge Officers to drive forward improvements in service delivery.

If the Council can demonstrate effective scrutiny within its process for setting, scrutinising and monitoring the improvement objectives and this can be evidenced, our regulators can rely on the Councils own in-house challenge and this would potentially reduce their involvement leading to audit fees being kept to a minimum.

Members were advised that Public Protection, Planning Services and Public Services are the owners of the specific objectives as detailed in the report and consideration was given to each of the improvement objectives. The responsible Officer highlighted the areas that are performing well and those that need improving or challenging to enable Members to scrutinise the action plan that is delivering the relevant improvement objective and responded to the queries raised during the course of the debate.

Improvement Objective 2 - Make Caerphilly A Safer Place To Live - Mr. R. Hartshorn (Head of Public Protection) explained the outcomes of the objective in improving citizen perception in feeling safer in their community and increasing public confidence in the services delivered and gave a summary of the actions that have been taken to date. He outlined the risks and threats that have been identified and Members noted the actions that have been taken and the evidence provided.

Members were pleased to note that steady progress is being made against this objective and were particularly interested in one of the priorities of the Safer Caerphilly Community Safety Partnership to "reduce anti-social behaviour and improve the street scene" and to the initiatives that are being taken forward to achieve this. Mr. Hartshorn explained the Anti-Social Behaviour 4 Strike process and advised that it continues to focus on providing early interventions to moderate behaviour with Community Safety Wardens maintaining a high profile presence across the borough, through active patrols, whilst focusing on 'hot-spots' as identified from community concerns and localised intelligence.

During the course of the debate reference was made to the deployment of Community Safety Wardens and Mr. Hartshorn detailed their role in continuing to enforce legislation. He also referred to the continued development of the Safer Caerphilly volunteer network and to the role the individuals play in working alongside agencies in tackling crime and antisocial behaviour.

Members then made specific reference to the fixed penalty notices that have been issued for both dog fouling and littering incidents and Mr. Hartshorn advised that results of specific prosecution cases and other formal actions are published on the website, in Newline and in the media. He confirmed that non-payment of fixed penalty notices and penalty notices for disorder and penalty charge notices will be pursued through the courts if the offender defaults. A further campaign is to be launched in this months edition of Newline and a video link that will try to influence behaviour and encourage dog owners to pick up after their dogs entitled 'Shameful, Filthy, Selfish - Dog Fouling - Don't Let Them Get Away With It' has been commissioned for release.

It was noted from the report that one of the objectives is to ensure that the Safer Caerphilly Community Partnership promotes community engagement through PACT meetings and as such the Pact process continues to be advertised in the local press and via local surveys.

It was pointed out that some PACT meetings are not well attended and the need to ensure the community are engaged in the process to give them an opportunity to raise issues of a local nature with the Police representatives was stressed. It was accepted this in an initiative of Gwent Police and as such individual members should raise their specific concerns with the local Inspector.

Improvement Objective 3 - Sustain Employment Opportunities - Mr. A. Bolter (Group Manager - Strategy and Funding) explained the outcome of the objective (grow/maintain opportunities for local residents to improve their skills to enable them to gain and maintain employment, maintain/protect number of jobs through provision of grants and specialist advice to business and SME support and training) and gave a progress summary as at quarter 3 and highlighted the actions that have been taken to date. He outlined the risks and threats that have been identified and Members noted the actions that have been taken and the evidence provided.

Mr. Bolter advised that most of the activities listed in the action plan are continued from 2011 and progress is positive in each case, however, the background for this work is ongoing and unemployment remains at a high level. Members were pleased to note that despite this grim economic climate, there are a number of encouraging activities and programmes. The EU funded projects (Genesis 2, Bridges into Work, Working Skills for Adults and Essential Skills in the Workplace) have all provided a very important support mechanism to help people gain and sustain employment, although the latter project has only recently commenced. In addition, the Council's Traineeship Scheme continues to provide significant opportunities for local people. This project has led to the development of the Passport Programme, which will commence in April 2013 and will result in a considerable increase in the number of young people supported.

Members were advised that with regards to private sector job creation and safeguarding, the Council's Business Enterprise Support Team continues to provide advice, guidance and grant support for local businesses. As a result of the positive response to the tenants survey the Council is now developing activities to maximise the impact of Welsh Housing Quality Standard investment to sustain, create and support new employment and training opportunities.

Mr. Bolter referred to the appointment of a Supplier Relationship Officer based within the Procurement Department who will engage with the small to medium size enterprises with regards to supporting and assisting the delivery of Authority business. The Officer will be dedicated to the development of local business and a number of awareness sessions, workshops, advisory and support events have been arranged between October 2012 and June 2013 in the hope to stimulate interest and further engagement in local (supplier) contracts.

During the course of the debate reference was made to the time taken to pay invoices to small and medium sized businesses which are comparable with the results for 12 months ago and to the number of grants that are available to businesses. A query was also raised in relation to the number of adults participating in the essential skills in the workplace project and it was noted that although agreement have been made with three employers, only one has commenced. The local investment plan will continue to be monitored in order to inform the process.

Improvement Objective 5 - Promote the Benefits of a Healthy and Active Lifestyle -

Mr. D. Phenis (Sports and Leisure Services Manager) explained the outcome of the objectives (increase number of people taking up leisure activities and participating in all forms of physical activity across the county borough, improving health and well-being over the long-term) and gave a progress summary and highlighted the actions that have been taken to date. He outlined the risks and threats that have been identified and Members noted the actions that have been taken and the evidence provided.

Members were pleased to note that steady progress is being made against this objective and that in certain areas performance is above target, particularly in relation to leisure centre usage, leisure centre membership, free swims and visits to Sports Caerphilly. Mr. Phenis advised that officers are continuing to deliver road shows, training and publicity events across the borough to encourage further participation and targeting those who are non-participants. Officers continue to monitor the use of outdoor multi gyms to determine whether they should be provided at other locations. Mr. Phenis also referred to the success of the pilot of 'street games' in Lansbury Park and referred to the number of activities that the youngsters are able to participate in. This would also be monitored and rolled out across the county borough.

Reference was made to the increase in the range of opportunities to help target those in most need and assist in the promotion of healthy and active lifestyles and Mr. Phenis referred to improvement to facilities to encourage increased participation and a number of new initiatives that are being promoted both within such centres and within the natural environment. With regards to the latter reference was made to the proactive approach to improved access to footpaths, rights of way, country parks, the countryside and cycle routes, further development of public walking groups and the use of bridleways and he highlighted the number of features that have and will continue to be presented in Newsline. With regards to the latter Mr. Price (Parks and Outdoors Facilities Manager) referred to ongoing dialogue with the British Horse Association and advised that a report on the use of open access to areas will be presented in due course.

Specific reference was also made to the measures in place to encourage children and young people to participate, particularly in the healthy early years scheme and it was noted that whilst the target for quarter 2 has not been met there are 13 further settings who are interested in the scheme and as such it is anticipated that the target will be met by the end of the year.

With regards to the increase of awareness of healthy issues in schools through the national healthy school scheme Members noted that 2 schools have achieved the national quality award so far and a further 34 are working towards the qualification. Officers continue to work with schools in relation to the appetite for life menu and a further promotional campaign will be undertaken in the new year. A query was raised on the progress with the tennis court refurbishment development plan and it was noted that a report will be presented in due course.

Improvement Objective 8 - Reducing Our Carbon Footprint And Improving Our Sustainability -

Mr. P. Cooke (Team Leader Sustainable Development and Living Environment) explained the outcomes of the objective (reducing CO2 emissions from our buildings and street lighting, reducing the impact of fuel poverty on householders, raising awareness of climate change issues and reducing the impact of our travel and transport to reduce carbon) and gave a summary of the actions that have been taken to date. He outlined the risks and threats that have been identified and Members noted the actions that have been taken and the evidence provided.

Members were pleased to note that steady progress is being made against this objective and particularly that £4.5m that has been secured to improve energy efficiency under the Community Energy Saving Programme and £200,000 additional funding has been secured under the Arbed programme. Mr. Cooke also advised that continuing work with schools mean

that 57% now have a green flag under the Eco Schools programme, a Green Fleet Review has been undertaken of the Council's use of vehicles, combined heat and power units are being installed at Caerphilly and Heolddu leisure centres (with a total project cost of £269,000) and that £75,000 has been provided from the Local Authority Energy Fund to improve controls on street lighting.

During the course of the debate on street lighting reference was made to new technology which was being trialled in Sheffield. It was explained that this pilot scheme will be monitored to determine whether it is energy efficient, will provide savings and reduce maintenance costs.

With regards to the turning off of street lights it was explained that each location had been assessed in accordance with the agreed criteria and concerns expressed had been taken into consideration prior to them being extinguished.

Reference was also made to climate change woodlands that have been created and Members were pleased to note that two woodlands are planned to be planted this winter in consultation with school children and the local communities.

4. CHAIRMAN

At this point the Chairman left the room and Councillor G. Johnston took the chair and remained in situ for the remainder of the meeting when the Chairman did return.

5. LOCAL GOVERNMENT BORROWING INITIATIVE - BIDS 2013/14 AND 2014/15

Consideration was given to the report which provided an update and sought comments on the Local Government Borrowing Initiative 2013/14 and 2014/15 bid proposals prior to it being presented to Cabinet.

Members were advised that the proposals highlight the priorities identified for the bid for 2012/13, 2013/14 and 2014/15 which is the three years over which this funding is available and that the funding is circa £2.8 million per year over the identified period. Members considered the proposed projects table as appended to the report which it was proposed is submitted as the bids for years 2013/14 and 2014/15. The £2.8 million of approved identified schemes for 2012/13 will be substantially complete by December 2012 and within the budget estimates previously provided.

Following discussion on the content of the report, Members endorsed the proposed submission of the Local Government Borrowing Initiative Business Justification Case to Welsh Government for the work as identified in the appendices to the report and recommended its approval to Cabinet.

6. HIGHWAY ASSET MANAGEMENT PLAN

Consideration was given to the report which sought comments on the approach to developing and implementing a Highway Asset Management Plan prior to it being presented to Cabinet.

Members were advised that the Plan details the authorities strategic approach to good asset management and the document provides a consistent approach to asset management for long term planning. It identifies the optimal allocation of resources for the management, operation, preservation and enhancement of the highway infrastructure to meet the needs of current and future customers. It allows the council to identify affordable standards, provide long term planning and seek appropriate budget allocation to deliver these services in order to manage the risk that is apparent within the delivery of highway maintenance services.

Following discussion on the content of the report, Members endorsed the Highway Asset Management Plan Annual Status and Option Report 2012 and its application by the authority in determining priorities in budget setting for the future delivery of highway maintenance. and recommended its approval to Cabinet.

The meeting closed at 7.05 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 11th December 2012 they were signed by the Chairman.

CHAIRMAN