



REGENERATION AND ENVIRONMENT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD AT PENALLTA HOUSE, YSTRAD MYNACH ON TUESDAY 2ND APRIL 2013 AT 5.00 PM

PRESENT:

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

Councillors:

Mrs. A. Blackman, C.J. Cuss, N. Dix, Mrs. E. Forehead, R.W. Gough, A.G. Higgs,
Ms. J.G. Jones, S. Kent, M.J. Prew, Mrs. D. Price

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

Together with:

T. Shaw (Head of Engineering Services), M.S. Williams (Head of Community and Leisure
Services), M. Lloyd (Highways Operations Group Manager), D. Perkins (Head of Legal and
Governance), G. Hardacre (Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development),
H. Morgan (Senior Committee Services Officer)

Also Present

Rosemary Davies and Matthew Roderick (Youth Forum representatives) and Clare Jones
(Youth Forum Co-ordinator)

APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors J. Bevan, R.T. Davies C. Elsbury and
S. Aspinall (Acting Deputy Chief Executive).

1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

2. MR. ROGER TANNER, STRATEGIC PLANNING AND URBAN RENEWAL MANAGER

Members were advised that Mr. Tanner had now retired and wished to place on record their
appreciation for all of the projects that he had worked on that have transformed and
regenerated communities throughout the county borough and to record their thanks for the

valued advice and guidance he had given to them over many years and for always dealing with matters in a professional and helpful manner.

3. REBECCA THOMAS - COMMITTEE SERVICES OFFICER

Members were advised that Rebecca has now left the authority to take up a position with Dorset County Council and wished her well in her new role.

4. MINUTES - 19TH FEBRUARY 2013

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 19th February 2013 (minute nos. 1 - 17, on page nos. 1 - 7) be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

5. CALL-IN PROCEDURE

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

6. CABINET REPORTS

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

7. REPORT OF THE CABINET MEMBER

Councillor T.J. Williams (Cabinet Member for Highways, Transportation and Engineering) gave a verbal report to Members and advised that with regards to collaboration the Engineering Projects Group have led on the creation of a memorandum of understanding signed between Caerphilly CBC, Torfaen, Monmouth and Blaenau Gwent to enable the sharing of engineering services across the four authorities. An approach has been made to South East Wales Transport Alliance (SEWTA) with this exemplar collaborative model, with the view of extending the collaboration further across South East Wales.

Reference was then made to the Fothergills Road project, which had commenced on 8th October 2012 and is due to be completed shortly. Members were pleased to note that the contractor has worked closely with local residents during construction to ensure the necessary road closure and the working methods produced the least amount of inconvenience for them.

With regards to winter maintenance, Councillor Williams made reference to the period of inclement weather earlier in the year and wished to place on record his appreciation to all staff that had been involved in the process and commended them on their dedication in ensuring they fulfilled their role in such conditions which had enabled key services to be maintained. This was reiterated by those present.

Councillor Williams was pleased to announce that the county borough is hosting the new Gwent Road Safety Unit on behalf of four local authorities (i.e. Blaenau Gwent, Monmouthshire, Torfaen). This has involved the transfer of 10 staff with the service directly managed by the county borough on behalf of the four local authorities. Six months on and this example of collaboration is proving successful with the level of service being improved and the cost of delivering the service reduced.

With regard to rail schemes, good progress continues to be made with the various schemes ongoing within the borough, including Pengam Park and Ride (official opening in 6th June), work on the new station at Energlyn and a station improvement at Tirphil. There is also a scheme to improve station facilities and access to Ystrad Mynach station.

Reference was then made to the annual Road Safety and School Crossing Patrol Seminar (1st March 2013) which marked the 60th anniversary of the School Crossing Patrol Service in the UK. The Seminar showcased the range of road safety education and engineering work being undertaken. At the Seminar, Volunteers and Officers who work delivering Kerbcraft were all recognised and thanked for their commitment to the project.

Members thanked the Cabinet Member for his presentation and he responded to the queries raised by Members in relation to the Metro Link for the valleys and the Kerbcraft initiative.

REPORTS OF OFFICERS

Consideration was given to the following items

8. YOUTH FORUM PRESENTATION

Rosemary Davies and Matthew Roderick (Youth Forum representatives) and Clare Jones (Youth Forum Co-ordinator) attended to outline the issues raised by both the Caerphilly Junior and Youth Forum. By means of a digital story and powerpoint presentation, they outlined the issues that the Forums had chosen to explore in the year ahead, under the four corporate themes of regeneration, education, health social care and well-being and the environment.

The Junior Forum had raised on the issues of smoking, bullying, litter and dog fouling, the issue that received the largest number of votes (43%) had related to the use of empty buildings for the community. Members noted the issues raised by the Junior Forum in relation to bullying and in particular 'cyber bullying'. Officers would further explore how best the Authority could support the Junior Forum in addressing these issues.

The Youth Forum advised that with regards to regeneration, 19% of votes identified that some places in the county borough do not have suitable access for disabled people, with education 21% of votes sought better transition information from schools to colleges and higher education. With regards to health, social care and well-being, 28% of the votes identified there is a need to be able to recognise all the types of abuse, how to report it and have the confidence to do so. Each would be raised at the respective scrutiny committee.

The issue that had received the largest number of votes (32%) and which had therefore been chosen by the Youth Forum as its priority issue for 2014 falls within the environment theme and relates to the need for better leisure facilities, more activity choices at a lower cost and improved advertising. The Youth Forum proposed that they work with Leisure to develop a smart card reward system and to create a phone application for the smartcard. The Forum sought to explore the feasibility of a free return journey on public transport when using a leisure facility and develop fitness sessions for all ages at the outdoor gym at Cefn Fforest. Given the success of the latter they would welcome the opportunity for such facilities to be rolled out throughout the county borough.

With regards to regeneration, the Junior Youth Forum had referred to the fact that there are a number of empty buildings throughout the county borough and suggested that where possible they should be used for the benefit of the community and had also raised the issue of litter and dog fouling. The Junior Forum had also identified that some places in the borough do not have disabled access.

In closing their presentation, Rosemary and Matthew requested that Members take on board their suggestions and welcomed the opportunity to work with Officers in order that they can be progressed.

The Scrutiny Committee thanked Rosemary and Matthew for their informative presentation and discussions took place on what assistance could be given to take forward the ideas raised. It was accepted that a reward system was an excellent idea that would help to retain present customers and reward customer loyalty for using facilities. It was suggested that tennis courts should be included in the reward scheme.

In terms of outdoor gyms, a programme of activities should be developed to encourage greater use of the facilities at Cefn Forest. This would help provide evidence that further gyms would be a sound investment and provide value for money. Reference was also made the 5x 60 sports initiative in comprehensive schools and the need to further promote this initiative. With regards to disabled access, details of the specific buildings were requested. In relation to the use of empty buildings for community use, in that not all empty buildings in the county borough are in the ownership of the Council, this would be more difficult to progress and details of specific buildings were requested.

Members were advised that Officers would continue to work with the Forum to further explore how best to progress the issues raised.

Councillor M. Prew, Youth Champion, thanked the Scrutiny Committee for their continued support of the Junior and Youth Forums.

9. SOUTH EAST WALES TRANSPORT ALLIANCE PRESENTATION

Mr. T. Shaw (Head of Engineering Services) gave a presentation on the South Wales Transport Alliance and advised that the organisation (10 local authorities in South East Wales) prepares and co-ordinates regional transport policies, plans and programmes on behalf of its constituent councils.

He advised that SEWTA prioritises the regional capital transport programme and formulates funding applications in pursuit of the programme. While local authorities implement individual capital schemes, and manage and maintain the assets created, SEWTA manages the overall programme and monitors progress of implementation and expenditure. It offers guidance to member councils on scheme development and monitoring and it also provides advice to member authorities on transportation issues and responds to related consultations.

Mr. Shaw outlined the working arrangement of the Alliance (with two members from the ten constituent authorities forming the Board, with Officers from each authority and a number of Technical Working Groups providing support) and detailed its function, core aim and objectives. He referred specifically to the development of the Regional Transport Plan and the Regional Funding Programme and explained how these are progressed.

It was noted that its role is to work towards a modern, accessible integrated and sustainable transport system that increases opportunity, promotes prosperity for all and protects the environment for people and businesses in South East Wales. Members were pleased to note that work is undertaken in partnership with the people and organisations with a stake in transport in order to achieve this aim and were pleased to be part of the process.

Mr. Shaw detailed the number of funding sources that are available (Welsh Government and other sources) and detailed how they are accessed. He referred to initiatives that have been successful within the county borough area, including the Ebbw Vale railway line and the park and ride at Bargoed which supports the wider regeneration of the town.

During the course of the debate specific reference was made to the role of the Working Groups (walking and cycling, rail, bus, integration, highways, road safety) and clarification was sought as to how the views of horse riders is fed into the process. It was noted that this would probably be through the Walking and Cycling Working Group which has representatives from a number of organisations but this would be clarified.

Mr. Shaw then responded to a number of questions raised over and above those which were considered during the course of the presentation, including ongoing discussion on the extension of the Ebbw line to Newport and whether there were proposals to increase the number of trains on that route.

In noting that the minutes of the South East Wales Transport Alliance Board meetings would be presented to the Scrutiny Committee for information, Members thanked Mr. Shaw for his informative presentation and for responding to questions and issues raised during the course of the debate.

10. TIPS INSPECTION REGIME PRESENTATION

Mr. M. Lloyd (Highways Operations Group Manager) gave a presentation on the tips inspection regime and in the first instance explained the difference between a coal/refuse tip (one that has emanated generally from coal, quarrying or other solid refuse type material) and refuse/municipal tip/landfill (a tip/landfill that has been established for the disposal generally of municipal waste). The latter are those inspected by Environmental Health Officers under the Environmental Protection Act 1990.

Members were advised that there are two pieces of legislation - the Mines and Quarries (Tip) Act 1969 and the Mines and Quarries (Tips) Regulations 1971. Neither the Act or Regulations impose a statutory requirements for the routine inspection of disused tips.

Mr. Lloyd then differentiated between privately owned and council owned tips and advised that part 2 of the 1969 Act makes provision for local authorities to undertake inspections, require an owner of a tip to take action, or, in certain cases, take action themselves, when a tip is or thought imminently to become unstable. The act includes powers to recover costs from tip owners and a series of appeal procedures. This part of the act does not confer upon local authorities the right to enter private land, except in specific circumstances. There are 231 tips within the county boundary (102 are within the authorities ownership and 129 are privately owned by third parties). Once ownership is ascertained through the land registry, landowners of private tips are being made aware of their duties and responsibilities.

Reference was then made to the training of the Inspectors and changes in the inspection regime with the recording of the data and the use of a specialised hand held trundle devise with GPS. All records will be managed electronically and be centrally located to enable definitive plans and records to be produced. As such there will no longer be a requirement for paper records.

With the aid of a detailed diagram Members were advised of the inspection methodology and noted that risk assessments have been carried out which have classed 15 of the 102 tips in the county borough as higher priority and Mr. Lloyd explained the inspection regime for such tips as opposed to those that are lower risk sites.

During the course of the ensuing debate queries were raised in relation to inspections of private tips and Mr. Lloyd explained that these had all been inspected in the past and there are no high risk tips identified in the private sector. Officers will continue to work with the owners as necessary.

Mr. Lloyd then responded to a number of questions raised over and above those which were considered during the course of the presentation (including those relating to both

Aberbargoed and Bedwas tips) and, following concerns that the Highways Inspectors would be taking on this responsibility, reported that their workload would be monitored accordingly .

Members thanked Mr. Lloyd for his informative presentation and for responding to questions and issues raised during the course of the debate.

11. MANAGEMENT RESTRUCTURING IN THE SPORT AND LEISURE SERVICE

The report provided details of a proposal management restructure within the Sport and Leisure Service of the Community and Leisure Services Division and sought the views of the Members. The proposal had been considered by the Committee previously and Members had agreed not to comment on the proposals for the management restructure until such time that the formal consultation had been undertaken and the views of the consultees were available. The report provided such information.

During the course of the debate queries were raised in relation to the number of staff in the existing and proposed structure, the proposed reduction in centre shift supervisors, the proposed through grade for centre shift supervisors and how this will be achieved, the role of the centre shift supervisors, possible redeployment, the consultation deadline and ongoing negotiations on individual aspects within certain job descriptions, the financial implications and the responses received from the Trade Unions. Both Mr. Williams and Mr. Hardacre responded to the queries raised and, following a request for further information on the objection made by one member of staff, outlined the details.

Members were advised that discussions have been held with the relevant Trade Unions (Unison, GMB and NAHT) and all staff affected by the proposed restructure. All staff have received copies of job descriptions and core competencies with confirmation of the grade that has been evaluated by the Job Evaluation Panel. A number of queries have been received which, apart from the one objection to the proposals, have been job or process specific and have been responded to. There are ongoing negotiations on individual aspects within certain job descriptions which will, if the proposed restructuring is approved, continue to be addressed as part of the ongoing process.

Following a detailed discussion on the information within the report and given at the meeting it was agreed to recommend to Cabinet that the proposals for a management restructure within the Sport and Leisure Service of the Community and Leisure Services Division be approved in principle subject to confirmation from the Trade Unions on the proposals.

12. 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. Councillor Mrs. J. Jones - details of the restructuring within Communities First;
2. Councillor C. Cuss - report on the feasibility of introducing by laws to enable Community Safety Wardens to issue fixed penalty notices to off road bikers;
3. Councillor M. Prew requested that the presentation made by Drug and Alcohol Youth Support (Caerphilly and Blaenau Gwent) to the Crime and Disorder Scrutiny Committee be made to the this committee.

13. INFORMATION ITEMS

The following reports were received and noted without discussion:

1. Welsh Assembly Government Development Control Quarterly Survey (October - December 2012);
2. Regeneration and Environment Scrutiny Committee Forward Work Programme;
3. South East Wales Transport Alliance Minutes held on 28th September 2012 and 14th December 2012;
4. Blackwood Town Centre Management Group Minutes held on 20th February 2013.

The meeting closed at 7.30pm

Approved as a correct record, and subject to any amendments or corrections agreed and recorded in the minutes of the meeting held on 21st May 2013, they were signed by the Chairman.

CHAIRMAN