



REGENERATION AND ENVIRONMENT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD AT PENALLTA HOUSE, YSTRAD MYNACH ON
TUESDAY, 27TH OCTOBER 2015 AT 5.30 P.M.**

PRESENT:

Mrs E.M. Aldworth – Vice-Chair – Presiding

Councillors:

M. Adams, Mrs A. Blackman, N. Dix, R.W. Gough, Ms J.G. Jones, S. Kent, Mrs P. Leonard, A. Rees, Mrs E. Stenner

Cabinet Members:

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

Together with:

C. Harray (Corporate Director – Communities), P. Elliott (Head of Regeneration and Planning), T. Shaw (Head of Engineering Services), M. Eedy (Finance Manager - Environment Directorate), G. Parry (Operations Group Manager), R. Kyte (Team Leader - Strategic and Development Plans), C. Forbes-Thompson (Scrutiny Research Officer), B. Davies (Assistant Solicitor) and R. Barrett (Committee Services Officer)

1. BEREAVEMENT – COUNCILLOR GINA BEVAN

The Chair referred to the sad news that Councillor Gina Bevan had recently passed away. All present stood for a moment of silence as a mark of respect and extended their condolences to the bereaved family.

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors J. Bevan, C.J. Cuss, D.T. Davies (Chair), C. Elsbury, M.J. Prew and Mrs D. Price.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Mrs E.M. Aldworth declared an interest in Agenda Item 7 (Proposed Change to the Caerphilly County Borough Council CIL Regulation 123 List of Infrastructure). Details are minuted with the respective item.

4. MINUTES – 15TH SEPTEMBER 2015

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Regeneration and Environment Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 15th September 2015 (minute nos. 1 – 15) be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

5. 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 verbal reports from Cabinet Members N. George T.J. Williams and K. James.

Councillor N. George, Cabinet Member for Community and Leisure Services, informed Members that he had recently presented a number of Refuse and Cleansing staff with their NVQ (National Vocational Qualification) Certificates. For many of these recipients, it represented their first achievement of formal qualifications, and over 100 staff within this department have now attained formal NVQ qualifications. In addition to this, a number of Sports and Leisure Services staff have recently completed NVQ Level 5 in Sport and Leisure Management, which is an excellent achievement that will continue to assist the service in its aim of delivering with a skilled and passionate workforce. Members were pleased to note the news of these achievements.

Relocation works are well underway to move Community and Leisure Services office staff from Pontllanfraith House to Tiryberth Depot. Some alterations are currently being made to Tiryberth Depot to accommodate the move which will take place in January 2016.

The Cabinet Member announced that during October 2015, leisure centres within the county borough record recorded their highest level of Direct Debit Memberships (5055) and Direct Debit income collection (£112,000), which has driven an increase in leisure centre usage and active lifestyles.

The Scrutiny Committee were informed that the Council's Exercise Referral Service will be trialling a programme for patients suffering from Parkinson's Disease in conjunction with Aneurin Bevan Health Board and Parkinson's UK. This trial will be conducted at Risca Leisure Centre and involve patients referred from Ysbyty Ystrad Fawr.

Members were advised that Sport Caerphilly have received £23,000 in funding through the Youth Crime Prevention Fund Partnership with Safer Caerphilly for investment into the Positive Futures Programme to deliver key diversionary activities (particularly around Halloween and Bonfire night).

Members were also informed of recent success in respect of the Green Flag Award, which is the benchmark national standard for parks and green spaces, with Council staff recently achieving 3 such awards for Morgan Jones Park, Nelson Wern Park and Waunfawr Park, Crosskeys.

Councillor T.J. Williams, Cabinet Member for Highways, Transportation and Engineering, presented his report and updated Members on the Multi-hog pilot being undertaken by the Highways Operation Group, which should greatly improve productivity levels within the department. The Multi-hog is a compact and robust hydraulically operated vehicle which can accept a diverse range of attachments to the front and rear for use throughout the year. It has been trialled over the last six weeks and an efficiency assessment is currently being

undertaken. If the outcome of the trial proves positive, Highways will be looking to increase its usage to augment the current work load capability. The Multi-hog has many uses, including road patching, water pumping for flooded areas, gritting capabilities, and mowing grass verges.

In response to a Member's query, the Cabinet Member explained that should it be decided to proceed with the purchase of the Multi-hog, it was anticipated that significant savings would be made in respect of highways maintenance.

Members were informed that the consultation on the Active Travel Existing routes maps has now been completed, with 80% of the responses received in support of the routes shown. It was explained that a further update would be reported to the next meeting of the Regeneration and Environment Scrutiny Committee.

The Cabinet Member advised that the Engineering Projects Group, in conjunction with the Coal Authority, had recently investigated a hole which opened up in the road at the Prince of Wales Industrial Estate in Abercarn. It was initially thought to be connected with old colliery buildings that once occupied the site but it was later confirmed that there was no linkage with any disused mine entry points. A CCTV survey of the voiding concluded that it was isolated in nature and related to one buried structure. No further investigation was proposed and the void is currently being backfilled. Officers will continue to monitor the affected area once the carriageway and verge areas have been reinstated.

Councillor K. James, Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Planning, updated Members on the annual Christmas Voucher Booklet scheme, which is run by the Council's Town Centre Management Team, and aims to provide local retailers with the opportunity to participate in a co-ordinated marketing campaign in the run-up to Christmas. This year's booklet contains 105 offers across the five main town centres within the county borough, with the intention to help retain consumer spend within the County Borough's town centres during the crucial festival trading period. Newspapers, radios and social media will be utilised to support the campaign and the booklets will be handed out in town centres and local supermarkets. In response to feedback from retailers and customers, the scheme will commence earlier this year, running from 16th November 2015 to 31st December 2015.

Other events due to take place this winter include the Bargoed Ice Rink and the River of Light Lantern Parade and full details are included in the winter 'What's On' guide that will be distributed in and around the county borough.

Members were informed that Caerphilly County Borough has been named in the top five Welsh council areas where benefit claimants have started their own business. In total, more than 4,000 new businesses have been started by jobless claimants in using the government's New Enterprise Allowance. In Caerphilly County Borough 270 new business starts have been created.

The Cabinet Member advised that staff from the Winding House Museums and Heritage Centre, recently attended a ceremony hosted by the Telegraph to announce the winner of the Telegraph's Family Friendly Museum Award. The Winding House staff were delighted to be given an unprecedented new award, created especially for the Museum for "Outstanding contribution to their local community".

Blackwood Miners Institute and Cwmcarn Visitor Centre were also the recipients of recent success, having both achieved a 'V' Award from Voice Magazine in their recent marketing campaigns. Blackwood Miners Institute were awarded 'Theatre of the Year' and Cwmcarn 'Family Day out of the Year' Award.

Members congratulated staff from the Winding House, Blackwood Miners Institute and Cwmcarn Visitor Centre on their achievements. It was confirmed that arrangements would be made to present the staff with their awards at the next meeting of Council.

The Cabinet Members were thanked for their reports.

REPORTS OF OFFICERS

Consideration was given to the following reports.

7. FLOOD RISK MANAGEMENT PLAN

Terry Shaw (Head of Engineering Services) and Graham Parry (Highways Operations Group Manager) presented the report, which provided an update on the progress of the preparation of the Council's Flood Risk Management Plan (FRMP), and sought Members' comments on the contents of the draft Plan, prior to its presentation to Cabinet for approval.

Members were advised that under the Flood Risk Regulations 2009, the Council has been designated as a Lead Local Flood Authority (LLFA) and has responsibility to produce a FRMP. The draft FRMP, which was published on the Council's website, must be submitted to Natural Resource Wales (NRW), who may approve it (with or without modification) or reject it.

The FRMP provides an overview of the flood risk within the county borough and details flood risk management objectives, together with a series of mitigation measures to ensure that the flood risk to the local area is addressed and reduced. The FRMP, which has been the subject of public consultation in draft form, must be published by December 2015 in accordance with the Flood Risk Regulations 2009, and will be subject to review after a 6-year period.

As part of the statutory consultation process in developing the plan an informal draft was forwarded to NRW during the public consultation period and they responded back with positive feedback which has been taken into account. Should any significant further comments be received from NRW then a further report to Cabinet will be provided.

During the course of the ensuing debate, Members stressed the importance of continued community engagement in addressing flood risk and flooding incidents. Officers outlined the ways in which this is carried out by the Authority and referred Members to Appendix C of the report, which has identified a number of local wards as being within a flood risk area and which have subsequently been included in the FRMP.

Officers responded to queries in respect of funding implications to implement the measures set out in the FRMP. Members were advised that funding has already been received from the Welsh Government (WG) to enable the Authority to prepare and implement a number of flood risk documents as required by the Flood Risk Regulations 2009. Funding at a much more significant level will be required in order to implement all the flood risk management measures for the county borough as set out in Appendix C of the report. Further discussion with WG will be required in the future to identify additional revenue/capital funding.

It was explained by Officers that there are indications that future funding for flood management infrastructure will be significantly reduced. This may also affect future funding in respect of the staff recruited to continue work on the Flood and Water Management Act, with a potential need for appropriate staff resources to be considered in the future.

In response to a Member's query, it was confirmed that the final FRMP would be split into sections relating to each ward within the county borough, and that copies of the relevant section would be distributed to the appropriate local ward Members.

Officers responded to a number of technical queries relating to flood risk management infrastructure within the county borough. Members were informed of the methods available to tackle surface water arising from large volumes of rainfall, including the use of drainage systems and attenuation tanks that slowly release accumulated water. Officers outlined the

maintenance processes in place regarding drains and waterways, and discussion took place regarding the recourse available from insurance companies and the government in respect of flooding arising from river sources.

Following consideration of the report, it was moved and seconded that the following recommendations be forwarded to Cabinet for approval. By a show of hands, this was unanimously agreed.

RECOMMENDED to Cabinet that:-

- (i) the draft Flood Risk Management Plan be accepted as the mechanism for the reduction of flood risk within Caerphilly County Borough Council;
- (ii) Natural Resources Wales be updated on Caerphilly's approach to the Flood Risk Management Plan.

8. PROPOSED CHANGE TO THE CAERPHILLY COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL CIL REGULATION 123 LIST OF INFRASTRUCTURE

Councillor Mrs E.M. Aldworth declared an interest in this item in that she lives near one of the developments referenced in the report. In that the report related to technical regulatory matters and not a specific planning development, the interest was determined to be personal (non-prejudicial) and the Member remained in the room during consideration of the item.

Pauline Elliott (Head of Regeneration and Planning) and Rhian Kyte (Team Leader, Strategic and Development Plans) presented the report, which detailed the findings of the public consultation exercise undertaken in respect of the proposed changes to the Regulation 123 List,. The report sought the endorsement of Members on the publication of the Replacement Regulation 123 List in accordance with the implementation of Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL), prior to its presentation to Cabinet and thereafter Council.

Members were advised that Regulation 123 of the Community Infrastructure Levy Regulations 2010 (as amended) sets out the requirement for the CIL Charging Authority to publish a list of the infrastructure that can be funded through CIL, which is a system of charges that local authorities can choose to levy against new development in their areas. Different rates of charge are identified for different types of development, dependent upon how viable each type of development is. The revenue generated from CIL is then used to fund infrastructure that will support future planned development in the county borough. Once introduced it is a mandatory charge that is levied against all new qualifying development.

The report proposed changes to this list which will enable school provision to be sought on-site in line with the aspirations of the adopted LDP. The proposed changes to the Regulation 123 List (as appended to the report) will have a minimal impact on the viability evidence that was considered by the CIL Examiner in that it will only impact on two specific sites (namely Waterloo Works and Bedwas Colliery).

Officers explained that the Replacement Regulation 123 List had been the subject of appropriate consultation in line with guidance contained in Planning Practice Guidance (as amended June 2015) at which time the reasoned justification for the change to the list was outlined. Two representations arising from the consultation had been submitted for consideration and a summary of the representations received, together with an officer response to each of the points raised, were contained within the report appendices.

Discussion took place regarding the impact of the proposed changes on the use of Section 106 agreements. Officers outlined the different scenarios in respect of planning applications, explaining that infrastructure involving on-site school provision will subject to Section 106 obligations, and infrastructure relating to off-site school provision will be retained on the 123

list and funded through CIL.

Officers also responded to a number of queries in respect of the CIL Charging Schedule, including an explanation of how this charge is levied in relation to the Local Development Plan, together with details of the income generated for the Authority as a result of CIL and the exemptions in place for social housing and self-build developments.

Following consideration of the report, it was moved and seconded that the following recommendations be forwarded to Cabinet (and thereafter Council) for approval. By a show of hands, this was unanimously agreed.

RECOMMENDED to Cabinet (and thereafter Council) that:-

- (i) the findings of the public consultation exercise undertaken in August/September 2015 in respect of the proposed changes to the Regulation 123 List be considered and noted;
- (ii) the Replacement Regulation 123 List be approved for publication in accordance with the implementation of Community Infrastructure Levy.

9. BUDGET MONITORING REPORT 2015/2016

Mike Eedy (Finance Manager - Environment Directorate) presented the report, which informed Members of the most recent budget monitoring position for 2015/2016 for the Environment Directorate service divisions, namely Regeneration and Planning, Engineering Services, Public Protection and Community and Leisure Services.

Reference was made to the revenue budget position for each of the service divisions based on the most current financial information available. Projected outturn figures for the financial year are compared with the budget to show anticipated under/overspends, and more detailed budget monitoring figures were outlined in Appendix 1 of the report.

Members were asked to note that as part of the budget efficiency savings in 2015/2016 to meet Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) targets and achieve budget strategy aims, the Environment Directorate were targeted to achieve new budget efficiency savings of £3.861m. The most recent figures indicated a total under spend of £1.182m, but it was explained that a number of ring-fenced budgets (as outlined in Section 4.1.3 of the report) meant this under spend was reduced to £607,000. Members' attention was drawn to a number of over spends and under spends within each of the service divisions and full details were contained within the report.

The Regeneration and Planning division presently have a projected underspend of £216,000. An underspend of £22,000 was reported within Countryside Services, with a shortfall in income generation for car parking charges at country parks offset by under spends in relation to a staff vacant post (which is a MTFP saving in advance for 2016/2017) and other operational costs. Planning Services reported an over spend of £112,000, which included an under spend of £33,000 within Development Control. Planning income is projected to achieve budget targets for the first year in a number of years and reflects an increase in planning applications. There was an overspend of £74,000 in Building Control, where income is projected to be £91,000 below budget, but is partly offset by under spend in staffing costs due to the delayed filling of a vacant post. Search fee income is £11,000 below the £112,000 budget. Planning-related income is dependant on the number of applications received and this will be monitored closely as the numbers of applications and fee levels can vary.

Members noted a significant under spend of £328,000 within Economic Development and Tourism which has been partly achieved by a number of vacant posts (most of which are proposed MTFP savings for 2016/2017) and savings in relation to promotion/publicity and

office costs. There is a projected £76,000 under spend regarding industrial estates due to income from rents in excess of targets and reduced maintenance, and a MTFP saving of £100,000 is proposed in this area for 2016/2017. Tourism have achieved a net under spend of £13,000 with additional income from the Big Cheese event being partly offset by one-off costs relating to the Urdd Eisteddfod event. Tourism venues are reporting an overall under spend of £84,000 due to combination of income generation above target and reduced operational costs. It was explained that MTFP savings are being considered for a number of tourism venues in 2016/2017.

The Engineering Services division have reported a net under spend of £700,000, but after excluding ring-fenced budget variations there is an under spend of £400,000. An overspend in relation to highway reactive maintenance repairs has been offset by an under spend in street lighting energy, which has arisen from low energy prices, together with capital investment in low-energy LED lighting as part of previous MTFP savings and a subsequent reduction in maintenance requirements. MTFP savings of £350,000 have already been approved with further a £100,000 saving against street lighting proposed for 2016/2017. The severity of winter weather in relation to snow, gritting and flooding will have an impact on the overall outturn position. Engineering are reviewing the highway maintenance programme and endeavouring to balance the budget by financial year end.

Engineering Services have achieved an overall staffing under spend of £182,000 due to vacant posts and the delayed filling of posts, and an element of this under spend has been allocated as MTFP savings in advance for 2016/2017. Officers also explained that budget variation in relation to Home to School Transport and Social Services Transport will be ring-fenced back to the service directorates. Home to School Transport is presently projecting a £257,000 under spend which is primarily due to new bus contracts, although taxi contracts are due for renewal shortly, which may impact on the overall financial position. Social Services Transport is projecting an under spend of £43,000, which is partly due to reduced vehicle costs resulting from investment in new vehicles.

Public Protection is presently projecting an under spend of £210,000 on a revised budget of £7.2m. Environmental Health have achieved a significant under spend of £61,000, which is due to additional income from Blaenau Gwent in relation to pest control together with a number of vacant posts. Catering are projecting an overall under spend of £20,000, primarily due to reduced operating costs in respect of staffing and food costs. This will need to be carefully monitored as any school closures due to adverse weather conditions will have an impact upon school meals income.

Community and Leisure Services are currently projecting an overall under spend of £56,000, but £275,000 of the budget relates to cemeteries, where any under spend is ring fenced for future improvement and enhancement works, and hence there is an over spend of £219,000 in this area. A significant overspend within Waste Management and Cleansing has arisen from revised contract arrangements for dry recycling treatments, which has resulted in a higher cost per tonne. There has been an overspend relating to waste treatment and disposal costs, due to a need to divert some residual waste to landfill during close-down periods at the Viridor EfW Plant. There will also be a one-off payment to Viridor this year for the processing of incinerator bottom ash arising from this waste treatment process, which will assist in increasing the Council's recycling targets and achieve the statutory target required to avoid the imposition of fines.

Officers explained that it is anticipated that the overspend within Waste Management and Cleansing will be partly offset by an under spend in relation to civic amenity site treatment, which has arisen from reduced tonnage as a result of the new permit scheme. There is also an under spend in relation to staffing and operational costs in this area. Volumes of waste tonnage and the treatment costs from the various waste streams are monitored closely as any fluctuations during the year can have a significant impact on the overall financial position, and it is with this in mind that a £240,000 contingency fund is retained in the event of an overspend in this area.

Leisure Services are reporting an overall over spend of £34,000. There is an over spend for Leisure Centres mainly due to a projected underachievement in income targets, where income generation is subject to variation in consumer demand and also from competition from other private sector facilities. This has been partly offset due to under spend as a result of a vacant post and other central costs, together with an under spend in Sports and Health Development. Income targets will be monitored closely as income generation is subject to variation depending on customer demand.

Members were asked to note Section 4.6.1 of the report, which outlined the targeted MTFP savings for 2015/2016 of £3.861m. The projected over spends and under spends outlined in the report have taken account of these savings targets. As reflected in the budget monitoring figures, most of the approved MTFP savings introduced for 2015/2016 have or will be achieved by the end of the financial year. However, there are some that require further review and monitoring, including increased income generating targets in relation to leisure centres, outdoor facilities, licensing and waste collection charges/replacement bin charges.

Some service under spends and overspends will be appropriated to ring-fenced reserves for specific requirements. The remaining Directorate under spend (presently projected at £607,000) will be appropriated to the Environment Directorate strategic reserve and 50% of this pooled under spend/profit will then be appropriated to the Authority working balance. Subject to Members' approval, the remaining 50% will be utilised for Directorate-based service initiatives or investment requirements.

Discussion of the report ensued and reference was made to the shortfall regarding income from car parking charges at country parks. Officers advised that the target income of £85,000 per annum had been an estimate linked to visitor numbers. There had been a lower target in the first year of charging, due to a delay in the implementation of the pay and display machines, together with an unseasonably wet summer in 2015 which accounted for a shortfall in revenue. Officers also explained that some customers had taken up the option of a season ticket, and in clarifying the reduced price of these tickets against daily charges, explained that this had resulted in a shortfall in anticipated income.

A Member suggested that the parking charge be reduced to encourage greater use of country parks. Officers explained that as the current charges were considered to be nominal in respect of all-day usage, it would not be feasible to lower these further. It was confirmed that Countryside Services staff monitor the use of car parks within country parks as part of their normal duties, with no subsequent additional workload costs as a result of these charges. A Member also suggested the increased promotion of country parks as a means to increasing income within this area.

Reference was made to a projected overspend in relation to the under occupancy of a number of retail units within Bargoed Town Centre. Officers outlined the progress made in respect of this area, explaining that they are currently in advanced negotiations with a prominent retailer regarding the use of a vacant unit, with it anticipated that other businesses will express interest in the remaining units once the potential retailer is established.

Discussion also took place regarding the underachievement in income targets within Leisure Centres. Reference was made to the increased level of Direct Debit memberships, with Officers explaining that current facilities are linked to customer demand. Members were referred to the ongoing strategic review of leisure facilities, which will examine the services offered and identify areas where savings can be made or revenue increased.

A Member queried the over spend within Vehicle Maintenance and Fleet Management, which has arisen from a reduction of work which is impacting on productivity and revenue levels. Officers explained that this was an area that had been identified for future income generation, in that consideration was being given as to whether the MOT station located within the workshop could be used to offer a MOT service to Council staff.

Having given due consideration to the report, Members noted its contents, together with details of the budget monitoring position contained within the appendices.

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

Councillor R.W. Gough requested a report providing detailing the vacant posts to be included in the Medium Term Financial Plan Savings for 2016/17. It was agreed that Officers would email this information to Members ahead of the Special Regeneration and Environment Scrutiny Committee meeting on 26th November 2015.

11. INFORMATION ITEMS

The Committee noted the following items for information, full details of which were included within the Officers reports. None of the items were brought forward for review.

- (1) Caerphilly Local Access Forum Minutes - 12th June 2015;
- (2) Voluntary Sector Liaison Committee Minutes - 16th September 2015.

The meeting closed at 7.25 pm.

Approved as a correct record and subject to any amendments or corrections agreed and recorded in the minutes of the meeting held on 8th December 2015, they were signed by the Chair.

CHAIR