



REGENERATION AND ENVIRONMENT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD AT PENALLTA HOUSE, YSTRAD MYNACH ON
TUESDAY, 8TH DECEMBER 2015 AT 5.30 P.M.**

PRESENT:

Councillor D.T. Davies – Chair
Councillor Mrs E.M. Aldworth – Vice-Chair

Councillors:

M. Adams, J. Bevan, Mrs A. Blackman, C.J. Cuss, C. Elsbury, R.W. Gough, M.J. Prew,
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. Harrhy (Corporate Director – Communities), T. Shaw (Head of Engineering Services),
C. Campbell (Transportation Engineering Manager), R. Kyte (Team Leader - Strategic and
Development Plans), G. Parry (Highway Operations Group Manager), A. Wilcox (Senior
Planning Officer), L. Lane (Solicitor) and R. Barrett (Committee Services Officer)

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors N. Dix, Ms J.G. Jones, S. Kent,
Mrs P. Leonard and Mrs D. Price.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest received at the commencement or during the course of
the meeting.

3. MINUTES – 27TH OCTOBER 2015

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Regeneration and Environment Scrutiny
Committee meeting held on 27th October 2015 (minute nos. 1 – 11) be approved as a
correct record and signed by the Chair.

4. CALL-IN PROCEDURE

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

5. 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 the Authority have been working with a specialist company to address flooding issues with the football pitch at the Centre for Sporting Excellence in Ystrad Mynach. This flooding was believed to have been caused by the porosity of the sand used on the pitch. The Cabinet Member outlined the sand testing process undertaken in line with sports governing body requirements (e.g. FIFA/World Rugby), explaining that this initial testing does not always identify problems in relation to the grading/porosity of the sand. The installers have now undertaken works at no cost to the Authority to rectify the issue and are optimistic that this should resolve the flooding problems.

The Waste Team within Community and Leisure Services recently achieved the “Best Use of Waste Hierarchy Award 2015” at the recent Chartered Institute of Wastes Management Sustainability and Resource Awards in London. This award was presented in recognition of the varied education programme and initiatives the Team have in place to encourage waste minimisation and increase re-use and recycling.

Officers have recently completed an evaluation of the Authority’s projected performance against the WG statutory recycling target of 58%. This projection is based on actual tonnage against the first half of the year and projected tonnage against the second half. The projection for the year end is 58% (although this could fluctuate due to cold weather factors) and Officers are currently developing extra criteria to demonstrate additional performance against the target.

The Wales Audit Office are undertaking a review of the Sports and Leisure Service and recently visited the Authority to interview a range of Officers and Members. A report outlining their findings is anticipated in the next few weeks.

Councillor T.J. Williams, Cabinet Member for Highways, Transportation and Engineering, presented his report and updated Members on activities relating to Road Safety Week (23rd - 29th November 2015). This year road safety officers are encouraging people to think about their car use and how they might “drive less and live more” by advertising via social media the benefits of sustainable travel and the initiatives offered by the Authority (including Kerbcraft, Walk to School Weeks, Mega Drive, National Standards and the Junior Road Safety Officer programme).

Road Safety Week coincides with the launch of Gwent Police’s Anti Drink/Drug Driving campaign, which runs over the festive season. Last year Bedwas High School won the Gwent round of the poster competition, and this year the Caerphilly Players amateur dramatics group (which includes one of the Council’s Kerbcraft Trainers) won a prize for their video which shows the consequences of getting into a car with a person who has been drinking.

Members were informed that the installation of 8,000 street light LED gear-trays is on schedule to be completed in April 2016. The scheme is projected to save up to £100,000 in energy costs in 2015/16 with an additional £190,000 in 2016-17. Full details were contained in the report on Part Night Lighting and Future Lighting Energy Saving Proposals that was due to be presented to the Scrutiny Committee later on the agenda.

The Engineering Projects Group have recently awarded a contract for the re-lining of the Bowls surface water culvert at Penyrheol, which involve the placing of a synthetic liner within the culvert to restore its structural integrity. This is part of an ongoing programme of maintenance works to surface water culvert assets owned by the Authority.

Members were advised of progress in respect of the Winter Maintenance Plan, with the Highways Team readied to deploy gritting vehicles in the event of severe weather warnings. An innovative scheduling programme ensures all routes are properly treated, and 10,000 tonnes of grit are held in storage in preparation for more extreme weather episodes. The Council has also updated its Winter Service Plan, which outlines the various key actions that will be undertaken during bad weather to keep major roads throughout the county borough moving.

Discussion took place regarding the Winter Maintenance Plan and it was agreed for information to be circulated to Members in respect of major gritting/grit bin restocking routes within the county borough. Members were advised that this information was also contained within the Winter Plan, which had been reviewed in Summer 2015 and was available on the Council's website. A Member queried the cost of supplying a grit bin and it was agreed that Officers would liaise directly with the Member to provide further information on this matter.

Councillor K. James, Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Planning, updated Members on the launch of the annual "Choose the High Street" Christmas Voucher Booklet scheme, which took place at Blackwood's Maxime Cinema on 5th November 2015 and was attended by pupils from Blackwood Primary School. The booklet contains a number of offers across town centres in the county borough and has been extremely well-received. Members were also informed that the "Choose The High Street – Past and Present" competition winners (which was held across county borough libraries in Summer 2015) were presented with their prizes on 27th November 2015.

Members were updated on Christmas events around the county borough, with the first Christmas Market of the festive season having taken place at Ystrad Mynach on 22nd November 2015, which attracted double the previous year's footfall. Festive markets were also held in Bargoed (28th November 2015) and Blackwood (5th and 6th December 2015), although the Risca Christmas Market (5th December 2015) was cancelled due to extreme weather conditions. Caerphilly Christmas Market takes place on 12th and 13th of December, which will be followed by the annual River of Light Lantern parade on Thursday 17th December around Caerphilly Town Centre and Caerphilly Castle.

Members were advised that the Bargoed Ice Rink event has a new location in Morrisons underground car park and will take place between 9th - 13th December. The event is supported by the Council's Match Funding Scheme and Bargoed Town Council.

Blackwood Miner's Institute have already sold 11,860 tickets for this year's pantomime and are on track for their most successful ever year, having nearly surpassed last year's record income with several weeks still to go. 35,000 "What's On" guides have also been distributed across the county borough to promote the wider events programme that takes place across the Council's tourism and cultural venues.

The prestigious Caerphilly Business Forum gala awards took place on Friday 20th November 2015. These awards reward success and recognise business excellence within the county borough and are open to businesses of all sizes and from all sectors. The Premier Award was won by the CPS Group, and Kinetic Pixel (a new tenant of the Council) were awarded Business of the Year - Under 25 employees.

Work on the Deposit Replacement Local Development Plan (LDP) is underway and will be reported to a special meeting of Council on 3rd February 2016. Further to consideration by Council, the Replacement Plan will be subject to a statutory six-week public consultation

exercise between February and March 2016, allowing the public to have an opportunity to comment on any aspect of the Plan (including its allocations).

Members were advised that all ten local authorities in South-East Wales have submitted a £1.2 billion City Deal proposal to the UK Treasury, which was supported by the Chancellor as part of the Comprehensive Spending Review. Welsh Government has also contributed the £600 million earmarked for the METRO integrated transport scheme. All Councils and stakeholders now have to participate in detailed negotiations with UK and Welsh Government towards reaching an agreement. This will also involve agreeing City Deal projects which lift the gross value added economic measure of the region by an additional 5%. Caerphilly Council Officers will be promoting projects which bring jobs and investment to the county borough by providing much-needed infrastructure and Members will be updated as this work progresses.

Members were informed that CON29 searches (which form part of the standard conveyancing process for the purchase of land and/or property) will be subject to VAT from 1st February 2016. In order to avoid a subsequent loss in search income (approximately £20,000) it has been recommended to Corporate Management Team that 20% be added to the Authority's current CON29 charges from the VAT implementation date.

Discussion took place on the Cabinet Member's report and Officers confirmed that the Council's website would be updated to reflect the increase in CON29 search charges, explaining that the increase would be applicable to search requests made from 1st February 2016. In referring to Bargoed Ice Rink, Members commented that although Bargoed Town Council were a major sponsor of the event (having contributed approximately £10,000 towards this year's event) this had not been reflected in local advertising, and they requested that this contribution be noted by the Scrutiny Committee.

Members also requested regular updates in respect of the City Deal scheme and the types of bids involved, and it was confirmed that progress on this scheme would be cascaded to Members as it arises.

The Cabinet Members were thanked for their reports.

6. CABINET REPORTS

None of the Cabinet reports listed on the agenda had been called forward for discussion at the meeting.

REPORTS OF OFFICERS

Consideration was given to the following reports.

7. PLANNING GUIDANCE FOR SMALLER SCALE WIND TURBINE DEVELOPMENT/CAERPHILLY COUNTY BOROUGH LANDSCAPE SENSITIVITY AND CAPACITY STUDY

Rhian Kyte (Team Leader - Strategic and Development Plans) and Adeline Wilcox (Senior Planning Officer) presented the report, which provided an update on technical work undertaken in respect of supplementary planning guidance for wind turbines and outlined the results of public consultation and representations received in respect of the Supplementary Planning Guidance for Smaller Scale Wind Turbine Development and the Caerphilly County Borough Landscape Sensitivity and Capacity Study.

The report sought the comments of Members on the representations received and the minor amendments proposed to the guidance in respect of wind turbine development as a result, prior to its presentation to Cabinet and thereafter Council for approval as formal Supplementary Planning Guidance to the Caerphilly County Borough Local Development Plan (LDP) up to 2021.

Members were advised that concerns have arisen over the significant number of applications for single and multiple wind turbines being received in the area, and the cumulative impact arising from this. Landscape Officers felt there was insufficient guidance for local authorities or developers to allow consistent assessment of the potential impacts of these smaller scale developments. In response to this, Blaenau Gwent Council (on behalf of the Heads of the Valleys Authorities, including Caerphilly County Borough Council) commissioned a specialist company to undertake a study on this matter.

This work informed the new guidance, which has been prepared in two parts (Supplementary Planning Guidance for Smaller Scale Wind Turbine Development and the Caerphilly County Borough Landscape Sensitivity and Capacity Study). Details of the consultation process and the representations received in respect of the guidance were summarised within the report, together with a copy of the consultation reports included within the appendices.

During the course of the ensuing debate, Members commented on the low consultation response received from the public in respect of the new guidance and Officers explained that this could be due to the technical nature of the document in that it is of greater relevance to the planning and development industry than to the general public. It was confirmed that a good response had been received from a cross-section of environmental organisations, industry representatives and local authorities against both parts of the new guidance, who were in agreement with a number of the proposals contained therein.

Members raised concerns regarding the proposed landscape sensitivity and capacity guidance in that it did not stipulate additional policy. Members expressed a need for strict planning criteria to be applied to the development of wind turbines. Officers outlined current policy in respect of such developments and explained that the Supplementary Planning Guidance is a piece of technical guidance that sits within the Council's planning policy (the Local Development Plan up to 2021). Officers confirmed that they would examine emerging policy to determine whether it can be strengthened in the forthcoming Replacement LDP in terms of required criteria for future wind turbine applications. Members requested that their concerns on this matter be reported to Cabinet and Council.

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 representations received as part of the consultations undertaken and the minor amendments proposed in Appendix 3 of the report with regards to the Supplementary Planning Guidance for Smaller Scale Wind Turbine Development and the Caerphilly County Borough Landscape Sensitivity and Capacity Study be considered;
- (ii) the guidance be approved as formal Supplementary Planning Guidance to the Caerphilly County Borough Local Development Plan up to 2021.

8. PART NIGHT LIGHTING AND FUTURE LIGHTING ENERGY SAVING PROPOSALS

Graham Parry (Highway Operations Group Manager) together with Terry Shaw (Head of Engineering Services) presented the report, which outlined the stages required to attain the projected street lighting energy savings agreed at Cabinet as part of the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) for 2015/16 and 2016/17 and the steps that could be undertaken to make further savings in this field. The report advised Members on the progress made to date and sought their views on future lighting energy savings proposals, prior to its presentation to Cabinet for approval.

Using a slideshow presentation, Officers gave an overview of the current situation of the lighting stock and the options available to attain the street lighting energy savings as part of the Medium Term Financial Plan. Full details of these options were contained within the Officer's report. Reference was also made to the existing measures in place, including part-night lighting for the majority of the inter-urban (roads between towns and villages), areas nominated for low energy lighting, the introduction of a central management system/dimming scheme and to the capital investment in 2015/16 of £980,000 for the replacement of approximately 8,000 - 9,000 lights with LED gear trays (installation in progress).

With regards to future street lighting savings, it was anticipated that further energy reduction initiatives will generate more savings in the longer term, although further investment will be required in order to take them forward. These proposals include the switch-off of all non-conflict area lights, part-night lighting savings in all non-conflict areas (for which a range of selection criteria will need to be determined) and the proportional reduction in the lighting maintenance budget linked with further investment in LED/low-energy technology. It was considered that the earlier these measures are implemented the sooner the savings can be realised and as such, Officers would further consider how the required finance can be identified (possibly with prudential borrowing).

During the course of the ensuing debate, Members relayed concerns from local residents regarding a perceived reduction in visibility within residential areas as a result of the change-over from orange sodium lights to the new LED lights. Officers explained that although feedback on the changes had been mixed (in that some residents viewed the new lights as brighter than the old ones and others viewed them as dimmer), overall the new LED lights provide a sharper and more defined method of light illumination. Officers stressed the need for Members to consider the positive impact of LED/low-energy technology on future budget saving proposals, together with the environmental benefits and reiterated that the main function of street lighting is to safely illuminate highways (and not private residential drives/footways).

In response to Members' queries, Officers explained that energy is purchased through a specialised consortium in order to achieve the most competitive rates and savings. Officers also provided clarification in respect of part-night lighting in conflicted areas and agreed to liaise with local ward members in respect of lighting issues and concerns within specific areas of the county borough. Officers also confirmed that there had been a delay in implementing the part-night lighting proposals in 2015/16 due to the need for further options to be considered and further consultation to take place with residents and interested parties.

Following consideration and discussion of the report, it was determined that each of the recommendations contained within the Officer's report would be voted on individually, and each proposal was moved and seconded prior to the commencement of the vote.

By a show of hands and the majority present (and in noting there were 2 against), it was recommended to Cabinet that for the reasons contained therein, the sourcing of the whole saving of £160,000 from the Lighting Maintenance Budget (as outlined in Section 4.6 (Section D) of the report) be endorsed.

By a show of hands and the majority present (and in noting there were 4 against) it was recommended to Cabinet that for the reasons contained therein part-night lighting be endorsed as part of the Medium Term Financial Plan 2017/18 savings, giving an opportunity for site-specific assessments and the setting up of an appeals process.

By a show of hands, it was unanimously recommended to Cabinet that for the reasons contained therein, Proposal 2a for 2017-18 be endorsed (optimised selection combining CPO (Halide) with LED replacements) for the 2017/18 Medium Term Financial Plan, with the proviso that there will be on-going maintenance costs for the cheaper CPO (Halide) units and their possible replacement with LED technology in 5-7 years' time, should they become obsolete.

By a show of hands and the majority present (and in noting there were 4 against) it was recommended to Cabinet that for the reasons contained therein, Proposal 3a be endorsed (the use of £1m to finish LED replacement of lighting units in 'conflicted' areas with the additional £1m replacing up to 40% of the remaining lighting stock).

By a show of hands and the majority present (and in noting there was 1 abstention) it was recommended to Cabinet that for the reasons contained therein, the preferred options/proposals as outlined in the report be reviewed and approved.

As such (and in view of the foregoing) it was RECOMMENDED to Cabinet that:-

- (i) the sourcing of the whole saving of £160,000 from the Lighting Maintenance Budget (as outlined in Section 4.6 (Section D) of the report) be endorsed;
- (ii) part-night lighting be endorsed as part of the Medium Term Financial Plan 2017/18 savings, giving an opportunity for site-specific assessments and the setting up of an appeals process;
- (iii) Proposal 2a for 2017-18 be endorsed (optimised selection combining CPO (Halide) with LED replacements) for the 2017/18 Medium Term Financial Plan, with the proviso that there will be on-going maintenance costs for the cheaper CPO (Halide) units and their possible replacement with LED technology in 5-7 years' time, should they become obsolete;
- (iv) Proposal 3a be endorsed (the use of £1m to finish LED replacement of lighting units in 'conflicted' areas with the additional £1m replacing up to 40% of the remaining lighting stock);
- (v) the preferred options/proposals as outlined in the report be reviewed and approved.

9. ACTIVE TRAVEL CONSULTATION ON EXISTING ROUTES MAP

Clive Campbell (Transportation Engineering Manager) presented the report, which sought Members' views on the draft Active Travel Existing Routes Maps and reported the responses from statutory and public consultation on the matter, prior to its presentation to Cabinet for approval.

Members were informed that the Active Travel (Wales) Act 2013 places new duties on local authorities in Wales to produce and publish Active Travel maps. The first stage of the Act requires local authorities to produce an 'Existing Routes Map' that has to be submitted to the Welsh Government for approval by 22nd January 2016.

The Existing Routes Maps prepared and consulted upon (and contained within Appendix 1 of the report) includes Active Travel routes in the County Borough that satisfy 4 points which summarise the definition of an existing active travel route (as detailed within the report). Of the 35 responses received during the consultation process (summarised in Appendix 2 of the report), 80% agreed with the routes as proposed.

Members noted that one minor change is required to the proposed map to Link 13 (St. Cenydd Comprehensive school to Caerphilly town centre), which amends the origin of the Active Travel route to remove the road bridge from the route. It was explained that If the bridge becomes compliant with the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) then the map can be reviewed in the future.

Officers confirmed that the next stage of the Active Travel scheme is contingent on a deadline being established by Welsh Government and that the work developed to date has contributed to a number of areas of Council strategy, including that of the South East Wales Valleys Local Transport Plan objective to develop innovative walking, cycling and Smarter Choices programmes.

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

RECOMMENDED to Cabinet that the results of consultation on the draft Active Travel Existing Routes Maps be noted, and that the proposed Existing Routes Maps (as detailed in the report) be endorsed prior to submission to Welsh Government by 22nd January 2015.

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

There were no requests for reports received.

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) Public Consultation on Waste Management, Highways and Environmental Maintenance Services;
- (2) Grants to the Voluntary Sector Minutes - 15th July 2015;
- (3) Bargoed Town Centre Management Group Minutes - 7th October 2015;
- (4) Blackwood Town Centre Management Group Minutes - 16th October 2015;
- (5) Risca Town Centre Management Group Minutes - 2nd November 2015;
- (6) Summary of Members' Attendance - Quarter 2 - 1st July 2015 to 30th September 2015.

The meeting closed at 7.09 pm.

Approved as a correct record and subject to any amendments or corrections agreed and recorded in the minutes of the meeting held on 16th February 2016, they were signed by the Chair.

CHAIR