



REGENERATION AND ENVIRONMENT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD AT PENALLTA HOUSE, YSTRAD MYNACH ON
TUESDAY, 1ST NOVEMBER 2016 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, L. Harding,
S. Kent, Ms P. Leonard, Miss A. Passmore, M.J. Prew

Cabinet Members:

K. James (Regeneration, Planning and Sustainable Development), T.J. Williams (Highways,
Transportation and Engineering)

Together with:

C. HARRY (Corporate Director – Communities), T. Shaw (Head of Engineering Services),
G. Parry (Highway Operations Group Manager), M. Eedy (Finance Manager - Environment
Directorate), C. Forbes-Thompson (Interim Head of Democratic Services), E. Sullivan
(Scrutiny Officer), L. Lane (Solicitor) and R. Barrett (Committee Services Officer)

1. BEREAVEMENT

The Chair referred to the recent passing of Councillor Philippa Marsden's father. All present stood in silence as a mark of respect and extended their condolences to the bereaved family.

2. WELCOME – NEW MEMBERS

The Chair welcomed newly elected Councillors Lindsey Harding and Arianna Passmore to their first meeting of the Regeneration and Environment Scrutiny Committee. Members requested that their appreciation to Councillor Dix and Councillor Rees for their valued contribution to the work of the Committee be placed on record.

3. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors P. Marsden, Mrs D. Price and Mrs E. Stenner, together with Cabinet Member N. George (Community and Leisure Services).

4. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

5. MINUTES – 20TH SEPTEMBER 2016

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Regeneration and Environment Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 20th September 2016 (minute nos. 1 – 10) be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

6. CALL-IN PROCEDURE

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

7. REPORT OF THE CABINET MEMBERS

The Scrutiny Committee noted the contents of the reports received from Councillors K. James, T.J. Williams and N. George, which had been circulated to Members in advance of the meeting. Questions and comments were invited on the report contents.

Discussion took place regarding the update from Councillor K. James (Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Planning and Sustainable Development) in relation to the recent Welsh Government (WG) announcement on the future of the Communities First programme. The Scrutiny Committee acknowledged that these are uncertain times for Communities First and for the many Council staff who are employed to deliver the programme across the county borough.

The Cabinet Member gave assurances that he will provide an update on this matter when further information becomes available. In the meantime, the current position of WG is that a final decision on the programme will not be made until wider engagement with communities, staff and strategic partners has been completed. WG recently launched an online survey to allow people across Wales to have their say in the development of building resilient communities, and the Cabinet Member encouraged all Members to respond to the survey so that their views can be taken into account.

The report also outlined an opportunity for the Council to participate in a collaborative regional project entitled "Business Enterprise and Innovation", which is due to be considered by Cabinet. Officers have identified two Council-owned sites allocated for business and employment use which satisfy European Regional Development Fund criteria and meet the aims of the project (the Lawns Industrial Estate in Rhymney and Caerphilly Business Park Expansion), with the Rhymney site put forward as the Council's contribution to the regional bid. Discussion took place regarding the project and the high occupancy levels/demand for units across these sites.

Discussion took place regarding the new Regional Transport Group as highlighted in the report from Councillor T.J. Williams (Cabinet Member for Highways, Transportation and Engineering). The Group recently met for the first time and identified two key areas to progress, namely the development of a transport strategy and plan to support delivery of the City Deal objectives and priorities, and engaging with WG over the procurement and delivery of the Metro. Regular updates will be provided to the Scrutiny Committee as this work progresses.

Christina Harrhy (Corporate Director – Communities) advised Members that a shortlist of bidders has now been announced for the Metro programme. Members were pleased to note that Clive Campbell (Transportation Engineering Manager) has been seconded to WG to work on the City Deal and progress opportunities for Caerphilly Council within this project.

Members also referred to the report circulated in advance of the meeting from Councillor N. George (Cabinet Member for Community and Leisure Services) and noted that Mike Headington (Acting Parks, Outdoor Facilities and Bereavement Services Manager) had recently been made an Honorary Fellow of the Institute of Cemetery and Crematorium Management in recognition of his work with the South Wales Bereavements Forum. The Scrutiny Committee placed on record their congratulations to Mr Headington for this impressive achievement.

8. REGENERATION AND ENVIRONMENT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME

Cath Forbes-Thompson (Interim Head of Democratic Services) presented the report, which outlined details of the Regeneration and Environment Scrutiny Committee Forward Work Programme (FWP).

Members were advised that the FWP includes all reports identified at the Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 20th September 2016 and outlines the reports planned for the period November 2016 to April 2017. Members were asked to consider the FWP alongside the Cabinet Work Programme as appended to the report and to suggest any changes prior to it being finalised and published on the Council's website.

Discussion took place regarding the items listed on the Forward Work Programme. It was agreed that the Leisure Review Proposals be rescheduled to 14th February 2017 and that an Annual Planning Performance Report be added for 13th December 2016. It was also agreed that Vibrant Viable Places Proposal be moved to 23rd May 2017 and that a Communities First report be added to 28th March 2017.

Consideration was given to a Member's request for a report in relation to Inspection of Coal Tips and it was agreed that this be scheduled for 28th March 2017. It was also agreed that the City Deal update scheduled for this date be removed from the FWP as it will be considered at a future Members Seminar.

Reference was made to the Car Parking Review scheduled for 14th February 2017, which will bring forward a report and recommendations of the CCBC Car Parks Task and Finish Group. A Member referred to recent membership changes within the Group and expressed concerns that the significant progress that had been made to date could be lost as a result. Several Scrutiny Committee Members expressed interest in joining the Task and Finish Group and the Interim Head of Democratic Services confirmed that the necessary arrangements would be taken forward in this regard.

Members also discussed whether it could be beneficial to invite the Chief Constable for Gwent Police and the Police and Crime Commissioner for Gwent to a future Scrutiny Committee meeting to discuss parking enforcement matters across the Authority. Officers confirmed that clarification would be sought from Members following the meeting on the scope of issues they wish to raise, and that the arrangements would be progressed accordingly.

It was agreed that subject to the foregoing amendments, the final version of the Forward Work Programme be published on the Council's website.

9. 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.

10. HIGHWAY ASSET MANAGEMENT PLAN ENDORSEMENT

Consideration was given to the report, which outlined the background and content of the Caerphilly County Borough Council (CCBC) Highway Operations Group Framework and Highway Asset Management Plan (HAMP), and explained the process by which it is internally reviewed on an annual basis. Members were asked to review the HAMP process and key areas and provide comments for consideration, prior to its presentation to Cabinet and thereafter Council for endorsement.

Officers explained that the Council has a statutory duty to maintain a safe highway network as set out under the Highways Act 1980. The CCBC Highway Asset Management Plan (HAMP) is one of three plans that make up the Highway Operations Group Framework (detailed at Appendix 1 of the report), the others being the Highway Maintenance Plan (HMP) and Highway Operations Plan (HOP). The HAMP is a strategic approach that identifies all the highway assets that are the responsibility of the highway authority (the Council). It assesses highway status and condition, and determines and implements the most appropriate maintenance regime within the most efficient cost parameters.

Members were advised that the working process of the HAMP is split into 4 parts, which offer relevant information and data for any respective asset enquiry and explain how this is reviewed and updated. The HAMP details highway assets with the relevant information and data for their identification and maintenance requirements, and is updated via a number of communication and feedback channels. A copy of the existing HAMP was attached at Appendix 2 of the report. Members were advised of minor typographical errors at paragraphs 4.12 and 9.1 of the report (in that 4.12(b) should refer to paragraphs 4.5 and 4.6, 4.12(c) should refer to paragraph 4.10 and 9.1 should refer to paragraph 4.12). It was also noted that an Officer's name would be amended within the matrix of information contained at Section 3 of the HAMP.

During the course of the ensuing debate, reference was made to several asset categories within the HAMP that have been identified as being under review. It was explained that the information contained within the HAMP is a "living document" that is continuously being updated, and that the HAMP itself is reviewed on an annual basis to ensure that all references and processes and the asset inventory of the highway network are kept up to date.

Discussion took place regarding review arrangements for drains and gullies, with Members encouraged to report to Officers any areas where they are aware of drainage or blockage concerns. It was confirmed that inspection of these assets take place twice a year and it was agreed that the inspection schedule would be circulated to Members. Officers also responded to queries in respect of tips maintenance and recycling and the work carried out by highways inspectors in relation to the assessment of the tip sites.

Following consideration of the report (and subject to the aforementioned amendments), and having given consideration to key aspects of the HAMP as outlined in the report, it was moved and seconded that the following recommendations be referred to Cabinet (and thereafter Council) for approval. By a show of hands, this was unanimously agreed.

RECOMMENDED to Cabinet (and thereafter Council) that:-

- (i) consideration be given to the content and annual review process for the Highway Asset Management Plan and the key aspects contained therein (namely the placement of the HAMP within the Highway Operations Group Framework, coverage of all aspects of highway asset management by the HAMP, and the identification of appropriate communication channels in respect of highway assets);
- (ii) subject to the foregoing, the Highway Asset Management Plan as appended to the report be endorsed.

11. HIGHWAY INSPECTION MANUAL ENDORSEMENT

The report outlined the background and content of the Highway Maintenance Plan and Highway Inspection Manual (HIM) and explained the processes by which these are internally reviewed on an annual basis. Members were asked to consider and comment on the content of the documents and review process, prior to presentation of the Highway Inspection Manual to Cabinet for endorsement.

Officers explained that the Council has a statutory duty to maintain a safe highway network as set out under the Highways Act 1980. The Highway Maintenance Plan (HMP) is one of three plans that make up the Highway Operations Group Framework (detailed at Appendix 1 of the report), the others being the Highway Asset Management Plan (HAMP) and Highway Operations Plan (HOP). The HMP defines a structure under which all asset-related Highway Operation activities are sub-divided into asset groups. The Highway Inspection Manual forms part of the Highway Maintenance Plan and sets out the processes and procedures to inspect, report, undertake necessary actions and record the works carried out on the carriageway and footway asset. It forms the basis of the Council's legal defence against insurance claims, both with personal injury and property/vehicular damage, made on the highway.

Members were advised that the HIM is divided into 4 parts, with Parts 1 and 2 of the existing HIM, which outline background and policy information and inspection procedures, attached at Appendix 2 of the report for Members' consideration. The HIM is annually reviewed by senior Highways Officers and adjusted accordingly, then annotated in the revision box on the title page. Members were asked to consider a number of sections requiring review, namely response times for highway defects, inspection frequency and intervention criteria.

During the course of the ensuing debate, a Member raised a query regarding the inspection and maintenance of double yellow line road markings. Officers summarised the inspection and repainting process and the parking regulations applicable to road markings and encouraged Members to report any issues in respect of road markings or inappropriate parking to the Highways department.

Members were reminded of proposals for the enforcement of civil parking restrictions to be passed from Gwent Police to local authorities. It was explained that a review will be carried out in the near future which will examine all aspects of parking across the county borough and the impact of these proposals on the Council. Discussion also took place regarding the enforcement approaches undertaken by other local authorities who are in receipt of such powers.

A Member queried the map within the HIM which detailed Inspection Areas and Highway Inspectors. It was explained that one of the Officers had recently been replaced and that an updated version of the map detailing the current Officer for each area would be circulated to Members and placed within the HIM. In addition it was stated that these Officers are regularly rotated (every 3-5 years) in order for them to gain experience across all areas of the county

borough Officers also provided clarification on the definitions of Priorities 4 and 5, as outlined in the highway inspections process detailed within the HIM.

Following consideration of the report (and subject to the aforementioned amendment), and in taking into account the content and annual review process of the Highway Inspections Manual, it was moved and seconded that the following recommendations be referred to Cabinet for approval. By a show of hands, this was unanimously agreed.

RECOMMENDED to Cabinet that:-

- (i) the 2 hour, 24 hour and 28-day response targets for highway defects be maintained with the management for this current service level being closely monitored, especially for the Priority 3 (non-urgent defect identified) 28 day target;
- (ii) the current inspection intervals be maintained;
- (iii) the current intervention criteria on road and footway defects be maintained;
- (iv) subject to the foregoing, the Highway Inspections Manual as appended to the report presented to the Scrutiny Committee be endorsed.

12. BUDGET MONITORING REPORT 2016/2017

The report outlined the most recent budget monitoring position for 2016/2017 for the Environment Directorate service divisions, namely Regeneration and Planning, Engineering Services, Public Protection and Community and Leisure Services.

It was explained that the most recent projections for 2016/2017 are based on the latest available financial information available. Projected outturn figures for the financial year are compared with the budget to show anticipated under/overspends, with more detailed budget monitoring figures outlined within the report and its appendices. As part of the need to apply further budget efficiency savings in 2016/2017 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 £2.850m. The most recent figures indicated a total overspend of £667k, but exclusive of ring-fenced budgets this overspend is increased to £869k. Members were advised that this overspend is primarily due to ongoing financial pressures in relation to waste management services. Following presentation of the key underspends and overspends across each service area, Officers responded to queries on each of these in turn.

The Regeneration and Planning division presently have a projected underspend of £120k, incorporating a Planning overspend of £124k and Economic Development and Tourism underspend of £244k. Development Control is reporting a £6k underspend and planning application fee income is projected to be £50k short of the £566k budget target (including pre-application advice income charges of £20k) but is offset by an underspend in staffing due to vacant posts and MTFP savings in advance for 2017/2018. There is an overspend of £64k in Building Control, where income is projected to be £76k below the £302k budget, and search fee income is £11k below the £112k budget. In that Planning income is dependent on the number of applications received, and application numbers and fee levels can vary, it is intended to review these income levels during the next few months.

In response to a Member's query regarding the Community Regeneration Fund (which had an underspend of £128k) Officers explained that the amount to be allocated to this fund for 2017/18 would be reviewed once the budget is confirmed. Discussion took place regarding the filling of vacant posts and Members suggested that it would be helpful for information to be included in future reports to indicate whether there is an intention to fill these posts or

whether they are being held open as a future budget saving. Members were also updated on the latest position regarding the vacant Head of Service post for Regeneration and Planning.

Engineering Services have reported a net overspend of £150k but this is reduced to £149k after excluding ring-fenced budget variations. There is an overspend of £249k for highway reactive maintenance repairs, arising from ongoing pressures on the highway network and a backlog of maintenance works from 2015/2016. The severity of winter weather will impact on the overall outturn position, although it is assumed that the winter maintenance budget of £1.14m will be fully spent, and there is a winter maintenance reserve of £492k which can be accessed if necessary. Members noted that a positive MTFP saving of £350k had been made against the street lighting budget for 2016/17 as a result of capital investment in low energy LED lights. Members were also asked to note an overspend of £100k in relation to the ongoing review and asset management plan development for car parks, which will be funded from the use of unapplied WEFO grant funding.

Members noted the position in respect of Public Protection, which is presently projecting an under spend of £91k across a number of its departments on a revised budget of £7.143m. Although financial information for this service area continues to be reported to the Regeneration and Environment Scrutiny Committee, operational service specific reports are now submitted to the Health, Social Care and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee.

Community and Leisure Services currently has a projected overspend of £732k on an overall budget of £18.136m, which increases to £935k when the ring-fenced underspend for cemeteries is excluded. The biggest area of financial pressure is within Waste Management and Cleansing which is presently projecting an overall overspend of £1,012k. There is a large projected overspend in relation to dry recycling treatment due to revised treatment contract arrangements, increased waste tonnage and the additional cost of treating materials that cannot be recycled. Additional budget provision of £1,600k is held corporately as contingency funding for overspends in dry recycling initiatives. There is also an overspend of £157k in relation to residual waste treatment and a £172k overspend in relation to Civic Amenity sites due to increased tonnage of waste being processed.

It is anticipated that these overspends will be partly offset by an underspend in staffing costs (£354k) and operational costs (£230k). Volumes of waste tonnage from the various waste streams and the treatment costs per tonne are monitored closely as any fluctuations during the year can have a significant impact on the overall financial position.

It was explained that due to the complexity and current financial position of this service area, a Board will be established, comprising of the Cabinet Member for Community and Leisure Services, Corporate Directors and other senior Officers. The Board will analyse each area of Waste Management and Cleansing and identify appropriate mitigating measures (including the use of corporate reserves) to balance the budget for 2016/2017 and 2017/2018 and develop a business plan for the service area for the medium-term future. Officers outlined the challenges across this area and explained that the Council will continue to examine and refine its recycling processes, and seek to improve the quality of waste product collected, in order for the 64% WG recycling target to be achieved by 2020.

Discussion took place regarding methods of food waste recycling and the recent public engagement exercise that had been carried out in an effort to improve this recycling rate. Officers explained that the response to date and take-up of food waste caddies had been very positive and they were considering whether to carry out this exercise on an annual basis. Members were advised that the revised food and green waste collection arrangements, including the introduction of the new twin pack collection vehicles in early 2017 should help realise savings towards the end of 2016/17.

Members were informed that the Parks, Outdoor Facilities and Cemeteries Service is presently projecting an underspend of £206k, but £203k of this relates to cemeteries where any underspend is ring-fenced for future planned investment to create and enhance cemetery

provision across the county borough (including a new cemetery in Caerphilly). In response to a Member's query regarding the deletion of the Parks Manager post, Officers outlined the interim staffing arrangements in place across a number of service areas and explained that these will be reviewed once consideration has been given to the pressures and MTFP savings requirements across each area.

Leisure is reporting an overall underspend of £95k, including an overspend across leisure centres of £32k, which is mainly due to a projected £40k under-achievement in income. Officers explained that leisure centres have a challenging combined income target of £3.516m for 2016/2017 which has been increased by £235k over the past few years as part of MTFP savings requirements. This overspend is offset by an underspend in Central Leisure of £90k due to vacant posts and other central costs, and an underspend in Sports and Health Development of £37k. Members were advised that income targets at leisure centres will be monitored closely as income generation is subject to variation depending on customer demand, and that Sports and Leisure Centre services are being reviewed as part of the Business Improvement Programme initiative.

The report also included an update in respect of the targeted MTFP savings of £2.85m for the Environment Directorate for 2016/2017. It was explained that most savings have been achieved or will be achieved by the end of the financial year, which have been reflected in the report. However, there are some targets that may require further review and monitoring as they may not be fully achieved during 2016/2017. These include a shortfall in respect of industrial properties income (which will be reviewed for 2017/18), together with underachieving income targets at Cwmcarn Visitor Centre (which has been attributed to the closure of the Scenic Drive for ongoing tree-felling works).

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

The meeting closed at 7.29 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 13th December 2016, they were signed by the Chair.

CHAIR