



REGENERATION AND ENVIRONMENT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD AT PENALLTA HOUSE, YSTRAD MYNACH ON
TUESDAY, 19TH SEPTEMBER 2017 AT 5.30 P.M.

PRESENT:

Councillor D.T. Davies - Chair

Councillors:

C. Elsbury, R.W. Gough, A. Hussey, S. Kent, J. Scriven, G. Simmonds, A. Whitcombe, W. Williams, T.J. Williams and B. Zaplatynski

Cabinet Members:

N. George (Neighbourhood Services), S. Morgan (Economy, Infrastructure, Sustainability and Wellbeing of Future Generations Champion)

Together with:

C. Harry (Corporate Director - Communities), C. Campbell (Transportation Engineering Manager), T. McMahon (Community Regeneration Manager), D. Smith (Principal Engineer – Traffic Management), J. Williams (Senior Engineer), J.B. Williams (Solicitor), E. Sullivan (Scrutiny Officer) and R. Barrett (Committee Services Officer)

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors J. Bevan, Mrs C. Forehead (Vice-Chair), A.G. Higgs, Mrs P. Leonard, J. Ridgewell, and Mrs E. Stenner (Cabinet Member for Environment and Public Protection).

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

3. RETIREMENT – TERRY SHAW

The Chair advised the Scrutiny Committee that Terry Shaw (Head of Engineering Services) had recently retired from the Authority. Members extended their best wishes to Mr Shaw and requested that their appreciation for the support he had given to the Committee during his many years of service be placed on record.

4. MINUTES - 4TH JULY 2017

By way of matters arising, in relation to Minute No. 6 (Cabinet Members Statement) a Member referred to a query he had raised at that time (the rationale behind the calculation of 13,500 new homes in the LDP as being required) and sought clarification on the response provided to him following the meeting. The Officer clarified that the Member had been provided with a detailed response to the requested information, and offered to recirculate this information to the Member. The Scrutiny Committee were also reminded by the Chair that they are able to approach Officers with any queries prior to the committee meeting.

Following discussion on the above it was

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Regeneration and Environment Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 4th July 2017 (minute nos. 1 - 12) 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 noted the contents of the reports received from Councillors S. Morgan and N. George, which had been circulated to Members in advance of the meeting. Questions and comments were invited on the report contents.

The report from Councillor S. Morgan (Cabinet Member for Economy, Infrastructure, Sustainability and Wellbeing of Future Generations Champion) provided an update on Section 106 funding proposals arising from the Tesco development in Risca (to be considered by Cabinet on 4th October 2018) and summarised regional WG proposals that will influence the strategic direction of the Council's future policies. At a local level, all Members have been invited to a workshop on Monday 2nd October to consider the regeneration priorities for the county borough, which will inform the new Council Regeneration Strategy.

The report provided an update on developments across tourism venues and referenced the need for capital investment to expand the Council's industrial estates portfolio. The Scrutiny Committee were also updated regarding Engineering and Transportation (including the commencement of improvement works at Pwll y Pant roundabout in Caerphilly) and the procurement exercise for the South Wales Metro. Members raised concerns regarding the potential for disruption and traffic congestion in neighbouring areas as a result of the improvement works to the roundabout. Officers gave assurances that there would be regular communication from the Council regarding the traffic situation and the progress made to date.

The report from Councillor N. George (Cabinet Member for Neighbourhood Services) explained that a report will be presented to Cabinet on 20th September 2017 seeking approval to commence a formal consultation process on the proposal to close Pontllanfraith Leisure Centre, and part of the consultation will involve the Scrutiny Committee.

The report also provided an update in respect of the Council's Kerbside Recycling Service, and new contractor arrangements for the treatment of recycling. Due to ongoing issues surrounding contamination of household recycling, the Council have implemented a series of measures to combat these issues and to raise residents' awareness of what can and cannot be recycled. These include a press release and Newsline article to remind residents of what items should be placed in which bin, households being notified in cases where their recycling

bin is found to contain incorrect materials, and meetings being held with recycling teams and contractors to ensure that the recycling process runs smoothly. The Scrutiny Committee will be kept updated on these arrangements at future meetings.

Members referenced the high number of complaints received by the Council following implementation of these measures and discussion took place regarding the range of the Council's recycling collection remit. Several Members also outlined instances where residents have not had their bin collected because a passer-by has placed an incorrect item in their bin. Officers reiterated that recycling placed out at the kerbside is a householder's responsibility and that bins should be put out at late as possible the night before collection, and brought back onto their property as soon as possible after the collection has taken place. Members were advised that it is a small minority of residents who are recycling incorrectly (often including items such as used nappies in their recycling bins) and that there is a need to take a more targeted approach as the current level of contamination cannot be allowed to continue. If there is no reduction in contamination levels, then the Council will have no option other than to change its recycling collection methods.

The Cabinet Members were thanked for their reports and for responding to the queries raised.

7. REGENERATION AND ENVIRONMENT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME

Emma Sullivan (Scrutiny Officer) 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 4th July 2017 and the workshop held on 20th July 2017 and outlines the reports planned for the period September 2017 to June 2018. The Scrutiny Committee were asked to consider the FWP alongside the Cabinet Work Programme as appended to the report to reappraise the contents (in view of low attendance at the workshop) and suggest any changes prior to it being finalised and published on the Council's website.

Discussion took place regarding the items listed on the report. It was confirmed that a Members workshop will be arranged prior to consideration of the Regeneration Strategy and site visits would be arranged prior to the Tourism Venues report scheduled for 13th February 2018. Members had also agreed that this committee meeting would be held at one of these venues. An initial report with regard to the establishment of a cross-part working group in relation to the Street Scene Review report was also scheduled for 13th February 2018. Further details will be confirmed closer to the meeting date.

The Scrutiny Committee were advised that there is only one report (Waste Review) scheduled for 27th March 2018, due to the breadth of the topic to be considered. Members were also referred to the items listed under "date to be confirmed" with it noted that a special Scrutiny Committee will be arranged to consider the Leisure Strategy report and that the title of the Vibrant Viable Places Proposal report has been updated to "Targeted Regeneration Investment Programme" (TRIP).

Members noted that the proposed agenda for 15th May 2018 contained some highly detailed reports which would require in-depth scrutiny and it was suggested that the Street Scene Review report could be moved on to the meeting of 26th June 2018. It was agreed that the Scrutiny Officer would email Members following the meeting to confirm the change.

Having noted the contents of the Forward Work Programme, Members agreed that it be published on the Council's website.

Members were updated on the list of information reports scheduled for September 2017 to

June 2018. It was explained that the Scrutiny Committee will be notified of any requests for an item to be included on the list, and the reports will be placed on the Members' Portal and on the Council's website in tandem with the main committee reports for each meeting.

Members were also referred to the three reports requested by a Member at the Scrutiny Committee meeting on 4th July 2017. A scoring matrix which evaluated each topic against a range of selection criteria was presented to Members for their consideration.

Christina HARRY (Corporate Director – Communities) explained that the first topic (the effects of Welsh Assembly policy on child poverty) was considered to be too broad in order to consider its relevance to the scrutiny committee, and would also appear to be a topic more relevant to the social care scrutiny committee. Following discussion on the topic, it was agreed by the majority present that the topic did not fall under the remit of the Regeneration and Environment Scrutiny and that the report request should be made to the Health, Social Care and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee.

Officers explained that the second request (Welsh Assembly policy of improving GPA/GVA and the spending deficit currently being experienced in Wales (tax raised = WA spending)) was deemed to be too broad to consider and determine its appropriateness and relevance for the scrutiny committee. However, they explained that certain aspects of this topic could be considered as applicable to the county borough, and there was scope to incorporate these into the Regeneration Strategy report already listed on the Forward Work Programme. The Scrutiny Committee were in agreement with this suggestion.

The third report request focused on the disparity between Cardiff, Caerphilly and Blaenau Gwent in terms of economic performance and policy delivery. Officers explained that this would be too wide-ranging a topic to facilitate any appropriate consideration by the Scrutiny Committee. Reference was made to the series of reports being presented to Council in relation to the Cardiff Capital Region City Deal, and Members were advised that they have full opportunity to comment on Caerphilly's approach to this programme, as and when the reports are considered by Council.

Following consideration of the report requests, a Member referred to the Velothon cycling event and requested further information on the cost and benefits of this event to the Authority. It was confirmed that arrangements would be made to provide this information to Members.

8. 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.

9. PHASING OUT OF COMMUNITIES FIRST, PROPOSALS FOR REVISED WELSH GOVERNMENT PRIORITIES AND ASSOCIATED STAFF RESTRUCTURE

Tina McMahon (Community Regeneration Manager) presented the report, which outlined the phasing out of the Communities First programme and the proposed implementation of the Legacy and Employment Fund, together with the proposed departmental re-structure and recruitment period which will enable a seamless transition to the Welsh Government's (WG) revised priorities and associated funding. Members were asked to consider if the proposals detailed within the report are appropriate and effective against the funding and policy criteria

offered by WG, and their views were sought on the approach to the phasing out of Communities First and the proposed approach to the new programme, associated milestones and staff structure, prior to presentation of the report to Cabinet for consideration.

With the aid of a slideshow presentation, Officers outlined the background of the programme and the current staff structure, details of which were contained in the report and its appendices. It was explained that since 1st April 2012, Communities First has been a Community Focused Tackling Poverty Programme, concentrating on the most deprived communities in Wales. The programme is funded by WG and has an annual budget of £2.902m. On 14th February 2017, following a period of engagement with communities and stakeholders, it was confirmed that Communities First would be phased out between 31st March 2017 and 1st April 2018, and that funding will continue at 70% of 2016/17 levels until 31st March 2018.

Officers explained that 2017/18 is intended to be a transition period which secures the legacy of Communities First whilst moving to a fresh approach to building resilient communities. Central to this approach will be the "Three E's" (employability, empowerment and early years). A full restructure of the Community Regeneration Team will be required in order to continue delivering the Communities for Work and LIFT programmes, as well as implementing the new Welsh Government initiatives, which will be funded from 1st April 2018. Both the Employment Support Fund and Legacy Fund (which are successors to the existing Communities First programme) were explained in more detail throughout the report.

Members were also advised of the potential impact of these changes to third sector organisations. The Communities First programme has contributed to the funding of a number of posts across Gwent Association of Voluntary Organisations (GAVO), Groundwork Caerphilly and Senghenydd Youth Drop In Centre (SYDIC), and a reduction in the current funding is likely to have a major impact upon the Council's voluntary sector partners. Additionally, from 1st April 2018, it is only Local Authorities that will be awarded the new Legacy and Employment Support Funds.

In response to a Member's query regarding the focus of the new programme, Officers explained that it would promote access to employment and encourage users to gain sustainable employment. Discussion took place regarding the WG policies to promote economic and employment opportunities in Wales and it was explained that WG are due to publish their economic strategy in the near future which will set out their plans moving forward. Members were also reminded of the benefits that the Cardiff Capital Region City Deal will bring to the area, including the Metro transport network which will improve access to work opportunities. Members also referenced the strong economic prospects within Cardiff and expressed a need for these to be more evenly distributed across the county borough and wider region.

Discussion took place regarding the success of the Communities First programme within the county borough. Officers explained that Caerphilly is regarded as having one of the most successful programmes within Wales, having secured the highest number of people into employment, together with other positive outcomes.

Queries were received regarding the impact on staff in view of the funding reductions and proposed restructure. It was explained that some Communities First staff have secured alternative employment in recent months, and therefore a number of posts detailed within the proposed restructure would be subject to a recruitment process. It was confirmed that a number of the Communities First-funded positions within the voluntary sector have also been vacated.

Reference was made to the Communities First budget for 2016/17 and the amounts allocated to salaries and projects. Officers explained that the budget allocation is set by WG and that there has been a need to secure additional funding to cover salary payments and transport

costs associated with the programme.

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 approach to the phasing out of Communities First, and the approach to the new programmes, associated milestones and staff structure be approved.

10. ACTIVE TRAVEL INTEGRATED NETWORK MAP

Clive Campbell (Transportation Engineering Manager) presented the report, which sought Members' views on the draft Active Travel Integrated Network Map and reported the responses from the public consultation, prior to its presentation to Cabinet for consideration.

Officers explained that the Active Travel (Wales) Act 2013 places new duties on local authorities (LAs) in Wales to produce and publish active travel maps, with the first stage requiring the production of an Existing Routes Map. Caerphilly County Borough Council's Existing Routes Map was approved by the Welsh Government in April 2016. The next stage requires all LAs in Wales to produce an Active Travel Integrated Network Map (INM) by November 2017. A 12-week public consultation on Caerphilly's draft INM has been undertaken and of the 121 questionnaire responses received, 98% stated they support the proposed routes included in the draft INM. Details of the response comments received were appended to the report. As a result of the consultation, there are a number of proposed changes to the INM that will be incorporated into the final version, prior to its submission to Welsh Government (listed at Appendix 3 of the report) by the deadline of 3rd November 2017.

Members highlighted several amendments required to the ward and community listings within the Integrated Network Map document. Officers confirmed that these would be reviewed and updated prior to the final version being submitted to Welsh Government.

In response to a query regarding the funding of the INM, it was explained that external funding sources (such as Welsh Government) will need to be secured to progress and deliver the proposals shown within the map. There is an expectation that funding will be made available to allow delivery of this statutory requirement but details have not been released to date. Members were advised that due to the diverse nature of the plan, there is potential for other funding avenues to be explored.

Members were pleased to note the work that had been carried out on the INM to date, and following consideration of the report (and subject to the aforementioned amendments) 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 subject to the foregoing, the draft Active Travel Integrated Network Map and proposed changes following consultation, as appended to the report, be approved.

11. SPEED LIMIT REVIEW OF A AND B CLASS ROADS WITHIN CAERPHILLY COUNTY BOROUGH

Clive Campbell (Transportation Engineering Manager) and Dean Smith (Principal Engineer – Traffic Management) presented the report, which sought the views and support from the Regeneration and Environment Scrutiny Committee on the methodology, outcomes and recommendations of a speed limit review of A and B class roads within Caerphilly County

Borough prior to Public Notice being given by the Council.

Details of the speed limit review, methodology, and data were contained in the report and its appendices. It was explained that the review has established that the majority of the existing speed limits within the borough are appropriate and conform to national guidance. The review across the classified highway network has identified a number of locations across A and B roads where changes should be considered in order to ensure that the speed limits posted on the highway comply with Welsh Government's guidance and are appropriate for the conditions. Consequently it is recommended that changes be made to the existing speed limits at these locations whilst others be treated with speed management measures. Details of the speed limit review, methodology, and data were contained in the report and its appendices.

Members views were sought on the review recommendations as set out in Appendix 5 of the report. Details of these have been forwarded to relevant officers and local ward members where changes have been proposed, and any comments and objections received following this consultation exercise were also provided in the table for information. For those links highlighted for further review, each link will be looked at individually where either a change in the road's speed limit or further safety measures will be included. Gwent Police's Traffic Management Advisor has been involved in the assessment process and supports the majority of the recommendations contained within this report. However concerns have been raised regarding the proposed changes for A469 Link 7 Puzzle House Junction.

It was explained that Members will be contacted individually in due course to discuss the recommendations outlined in Appendix 5 and the additional requests received for changes to be made to the speed limits in their respective wards. All proposed changes to the speed limits will be subject to the standard traffic regulation order process which involves a statutory consultation process with relevant parties including local ward members and the Chief Constable of Gwent Police. and Public Notice being given. The recommendations would need to consider the responses from the statutory consultation process and the amount of works would be reviewed to establish phasing based on available funding streams (e.g. Welsh Government grants).

Discussion took place regarding accident hotspots within the authority and the reasons for such incidents. Officers explained that this is reliant on the information made available (in that most damage only car accidents are not reported to the Authority so the circumstances of the incidents are unknown). In the event of reported collisions where there is personal injury, the police will prepare an incident report detailing the contributing factors. A Member queried the need for some of the proposed speed limit increases and it was explained that this is to raise consistency in speed limits across the county borough in accordance with the guidance and design standards. Members were encouraged to relay any safety concerns arising from these proposals back to Officers. The Scrutiny Committee also noted concerns relating to the effectiveness of a proposed speed limit decrease at Watford Road to Caerphilly Mountain. Discussion also took place regarding traffic calming measures and it was explained that these are only used in very built-up areas or in particular areas of concern where speed management is needed.

Following consideration of the report, Members endorsed the progression of the recommendations arising from the Speed Limit Review as set out in the report and its appendices.

12. APPORTIONMENT OF HIGHWAY MAINTENANCE BUDGET 2017/2018

Consideration was given to the report, which provided details of the proposed apportionment of the highway maintenance budget for 2017/2018, and asked Members to consider if the proposed allocations promote value for money and maximum impact.

Members were referred to Appendix 1 of the report which outlines the allocation of the 2017/2018 Highway Maintenance Budget (totalling £7,741,926). The revenue budget includes revenue contributions to Capital outlay (RCCO) for Carriageway and Footway resurfacing schemes of £170k and £230k respectively. The street lighting budget allocation (included in the above) is £1,704,000, which is inclusive of £1,228,000 energy costs. This has seen a saving of £350,000 from the 2016/17 budget to attain the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) target. This reduction consists of £190,000 of energy savings and £160,000 from lighting maintenance. Recent notification from energy companies are that there will be sizeable energy price increase for 2017/18 amounting to 14.15%. A report on potential options to mitigate any future budget increases is scheduled to be presented to the Scrutiny Committee in the autumn.

Details of the 2017/2018 capital budget allocation in relation to highway operations were detailed in Appendix 2. The budget remains unchanged and includes £750,000 and £150,000, directly related to highway resurfacing and footways respectively. Locations of the specific schemes, where appropriate, were provided in Appendices 3, 4 and 6 of the report. Members noted that the Winter Maintenance/ Severe Weather budget has been held at the 2016-17 level of £1.14m, as part of measures to protect this fundamental service area from savings

It was explained that the ongoing strategy is to maximise the impact of existing funding, based on priorities, innovation and standards, whilst ensuring the safety of highway users. Although the projected MTFP savings have been deferred for 2017/18, highway management is likely to be directly challenged over the coming years (2018-22) and this will inevitably present challenges for Officers to consider future priorities and innovative approaches to these issues. The highway asset is the Authority's largest asset, valued at almost £2 billion. In order to try and maintain the highway to an acceptable standard, that does not compromise user safety, alternate strategies (such as preventative maintenance techniques) are being more widely utilised. There will be funding challenges as a result of the MTFP going forward and it is likely that the standard of service currently offered will have to reduce. As such it is imperative that a prioritised risk based approach to highway maintenance continues.

Members were advised that overall, for a wide ranging front line service delivery area, the performance of Highway Operations is judged to be good, producing variable results in view of key objectives set out. Services are benchmarked against other authorities in Wales and reported annually.

Discussion took place regarding street lighting measures in view of the anticipated increase in energy costs. Officers confirmed that the future report to be presented to the Scrutiny Committee will take into account the increase in energy costs and the overall financial situation of the Council, and will consider a full range of options to mitigate any future budget increases. Members were reminded of the need to make savings in future years and of the impact this could have across all service areas. In response to a Member's query as to whether solar power could be explored for use with street lighting, Officers explained that suitable technology is being developed but is not yet available.

Following consideration of the report, Members noted its contents and the proposed interventions detailed in order to maximise service standards from the allocated highway maintenance budget for 2017/18.

The meeting closed at 6.56 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 1st November 2017, they were signed by the Chair.

CHAIR