



## **REGENERATION AND ENVIRONMENT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - 30TH OCTOBER 2018**

**SUBJECT: DELIVERY OF “STREET SCENE” SERVICES WITHIN CAERPHILLY  
COUNTY BOROUGH**

**REPORT BY: INTERIM CORPORATE DIRECTOR - COMMUNITIES**

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### **1. PURPOSE OF REPORT**

- 1.1 To advise Members of the Regeneration and Environment Scrutiny Committee of the outcome of the Street Scene Working Group.

### **2. SUMMARY**

- 2.1 On the 13<sup>th</sup> February 2018, a report was considered by the Regeneration and Environment Scrutiny Committee on the formation of a Scrutiny Working Group examining the current methods of service delivery for key services that affect the appearance of the Authority's streets, i.e. green space maintenance and cleansing.
- 2.2 Cross party representation was received comprising of the following Elected Members, Councillor Rob Gough (Chair), Councillor John Ridgewell, Councillor Walter Williams, Councillor Tom Williams and Councillor Adrian Hussey.
- 2.3 In total, four meetings of the group were held on the 19<sup>th</sup> April, 18<sup>th</sup> May, 23<sup>rd</sup> May and the 18<sup>th</sup> September.
- 2.4 The findings of the Working Group are detailed in the report for consideration by the full Committee.

### **3. LINKS TO STRATEGY**

- 3.1 The Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 is about improving the social, economic, environmental and cultural wellbeing of Wales. It requires public bodies to think more about the long term, working with people and communities, looking to prevent problems and take a more joined up approach. This will create a Wales that we all want to live in, now and in the future.

The Act puts in place seven wellbeing goals:-

- A prosperous Wales
- A resilient Wales
- A healthier Wales
- A more equal Wales
- A Wales of cohesive communities
- A Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh Language
- A globally responsible Wales.

The content of this report links to: a Prosperous Wales, a Resilient Wales, A Healthier Wales and a Globally Responsible Wales.

- 3.2 The Community & Leisure Services Divisional Service Plan contains objectives to meet a range of statutory and non-statutory targets. The plan also outlines the division's contribution to the Authority's Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP).

#### **4. THE REPORT**

- 4.1 At the first group meeting, members received detailed presentations from the Green Spaces and Transport Service Manager and the Waste Strategy and Operations Manager on the way services are currently delivered within Caerphilly. Members were advised how each service area is structured, provided with details of budget, details of savings made as part of the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) and an indication of savings requirements going forward. Members had the opportunity to scrutinise existing management structures and the way in which front line services are currently delivered to residents.

- 4.2 At the second meeting, Members received a detailed presentation from David Henrys who represented APSE (Association for Public Service Excellence). Mr. Henrys outlined the role of APSE, the definition of 'Street Scene' along with services which tend to be included and the pros and cons, potential cost savings and reflected upon a number of case studies where other Authorities (not necessarily neighbouring Authorities) have adopted the Street Scene approach. APSE also set out the categories of local Authorities who deliver street scene services via:-

- SS1 – fully integrated street scene service under the control of one distinct manager with combined duties of staff. Average population less than 138,000;
- SS2 – services work under one manager but continue to operate independently. Average population 153,000;
- SS3 – no street scene operation, series completely separate in terms of management and operation. Average population 289,000.

Caerphilly County Borough Council sits within the SS2 category, given that both waste management and green infrastructure maintenance sit within the Community & Leisure Services Division (reporting to one Head of Service) and have an extremely close working relationship.

- 4.3 Members had the opportunity to consider the pros and cons of integrated working and ask detailed questions of the independent advisor.
- 4.4 In the third meeting, Members discussed the cost of service provision, the resources deployed and MTFP savings achieved and potential effects on the 'street scene' going forward. Members made representations in particular to the lack of annual bedding, hanging baskets and floral displays, grass cutting frequencies and the cost of hiring sports pitches. Officers reminded Members that since 2012/13, there have been £1.1 million budget reductions from the Parks & Open Spaces budget to contribute to the Council's overall MTFP. Officers provided a detailed breakdown of the number of sports pitches across the county borough along with the overall cost of maintenance and income, it was highlighted that this element of the service was not achieving its income target set out within the Council's financial plan.
- 4.5 The working group were keen to look at the way in which some neighbouring Authorities were structured, in particular Rhondda Cynon Taff County Borough Council (RCTCBC). Officers spoke at length to the Parks and Countryside Manager at RCTCBC and fed back findings to the working group during the fourth meeting held on the 18<sup>th</sup> September. Some key points were that RCTCBC operate a Street Care department who are responsible for street

cleansing, grass cutting (on highways and housing land only), they have an 'overgrowth' team who deal with complaints relating to overgrown areas/footpaths etc. and they also undertake an element of weed spraying. The Parks and Countryside service sits within a different section/directorate and they maintain and manage both urban and country parks. Due to the large number of complaints regarding grass cutting within cemeteries, which was previously undertaken by 'Street Care', this has recently been brought back into the Parks and Countryside service. In terms of grass cutting frequencies, RCTCBC reduced from 12 to 6 during the growing season but due to the number of complaints from residents this was increased to 8 (Caerphilly's grass cutting frequency was reduced from 12 to 9 cuts during the growing season). In terms of hanging baskets, these were removed four years ago along with annual bedding, which is only now provided in their main urban parks. Within Caerphilly, hanging baskets are still provided within the principle town centres but are funded and managed by the respective Town Councils. Annual bedding was removed a number of years ago as part of the MTFP, however some of the beds were planted with herbaceous plants in order to retain an element of floral provision within the urban parks environment.

#### 4.6 The Working Group made a number of observations and recommendations:-

- (1) Members considered that CCBC services are currently structured well to meet the service delivery needs of the county borough. Members also wished to acknowledge the great work that the Council workforce undertake.
- (2) Members commented that if grass cutting schedules (particularly around vision splays) are reviewed, consideration should be given to highway safety in the event that the frequency of cuts be reduced.
- (3) Members felt that there should be more pro-active enforcement regarding littering, dog fouling and fly tipping. Members were advised that financial penalties are currently set at the maximum limit and later this year Cabinet will be asked to consider approving civil steps to recover the full costs of clearing fly tipping etc. from the perpetrators. Members were reminded that in order to raise awareness the outcome of successful prosecutions are detailed in Newslines and on the corporate website.
- (4) Members felt that an information bulletin should be sent advising them all of any changes to street scene service provision which would allow them to respond pro-actively to their constituents with any queries.
- (5) In relation to fly tipping, members felt that all staff within the Authority (irrespective of the service within which they are employed) should take responsibility for any items they see discarded. Each member of staff should take ownership and pride and become 'Street Scene Ambassadors' and either report things they see or to stop and dispose of the item(s). Whilst Members acknowledged the good work undertaken by staff, officers confirmed this approach could be reaffirmed with staff via Team Briefing and other communication channels.
- (6) Members requested that the frequency of litter bin emptying within town centres be reviewed particularly during events. Officers will discuss with the Marketing and Events team to agree a way forward.
- (7) In relation to highway weed spraying, members felt that the contractor should be monitored robustly to ensure their compliance with the contract conditions and that the operation is undertaken at the optimum time to ensure weeds are treated.
- (8) As the council faces greater financial constraints, Members felt that a fundamental service review may be required at a later point in time, which would detail the impact of financial savings that have been previously agreed as well as any future savings required and their effect on the appearance of the County Borough.

## **5. WELL-BEING OF FUTURE GENERATIONS**

5.1 The delivery of “Street Scene” services makes a contribution across the seven well-being goals but in particular to the following four:

1. **A Prosperous Wales**: ensuring that the county borough is clean, green and well maintained, attracts inward investment and supports indigenous business.
2. **A Resilient Wales**: Effective management of our natural and built environment enables the County Borough to play its part in ensuring resilience to our changing climate and global demands for greater care of the environment and its habitats.
3. **A Healthier Wales**: Protecting and enhancing the natural environment can assist in encouraging our population to become more active by using the countryside for activity. There is significant evidence to support the view that undertaking an active lifestyle has positive impacts on mental and physical health and wellbeing.
4. **A Globally Responsible Wales**: Effective management of our natural environment ensures that we are prepared for the challenge of global demands and greater care of the environment and its habitats when dealing with the potential impacts of climate change.

## **6. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS**

6.1 There are no equalities implications associated with this report.

## **7. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

7.1 Further savings will be realised during the 2018/19 financial year following the integration of the Parks & Countryside service.

7.2 There are no other significant financial implications associated with this report.

## **8. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS**

8.1 There are no personnel implications associated with this report.

## **9. CONSULTATIONS**

9.1 This report reflects the views of the listed consultees.

## **10. RECOMMENDATIONS**

10.1 The Working Group recommended that:-

- (1) If grass cutting schedules (particularly around vision splays) are reviewed, consideration is given to highway safety should the frequency of cuts be reduced.
- (2) There should be more pro-active enforcement regarding littering, dog fouling and fly tipping.
- (3) An information bulletin should be sent advising Members of any changes to service provision which would allow them to respond pro-actively to their constituents with any queries.

- (4) In relation to fly tipping, all staff within the Authority (irrespective of the service within which they are employed) should take responsibility for any items they see discarded.
- (5) The frequency of litter bin emptying within town centres should be reviewed particularly during events. Officers will discuss with the Marketing and Events team to agree a way forward.
- (6) The highway weed spraying contract should be monitored robustly to ensure compliance with the contract conditions and that the operation is undertaken at the optimum time to ensure weeds are treated.
- (7) Consideration be given to a further street scene update report being brought back to the Committee at some point in the future in the event that significant, further financial savings are required from these services.

## **11. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 11.1 To update Scrutiny Committee on the recommendations of the Street Scene Working Group.

## **12. STATUTORY POWER**

- 12.1 Local Government Act, Environmental Protection Act and Highways Act.

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