



REGENERATION AND ENVIRONMENT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD AT PENALLTA HOUSE, YSTRAD MYNACH ON
TUESDAY, 30TH OCTOBER 2018 AT 5.30 P.M.**

PRESENT:

Councillor D.T. Davies - Chair
Councillor Mrs C. Forehead - Vice-Chair

Councillors:

J. Bevan, C. Elsbury, R.W. Gough, Ms P. Leonard, J. Scriven, G. Simmonds, A. Whitcombe, T.J. Williams, W. Williams, B. Zaplatynski

Cabinet Members:

N. George (Neighbourhood Services), Mrs E. Stenner (Environment and Public Protection). S. Morgan (Economy, Infrastructure, Sustainability and Wellbeing of Future Generations Champion)

Together with:

M.S. Williams (Interim Corporate Director of Communities), R. Kyte (Head of Regeneration and Planning), M. Lloyd (Head of Infrastructure), M. Headington (Green Spaces and Transport Services Manager), P. Hudson (Marketing and Events Manager), H. Jones (Waste Strategy and Operations Manager), T. Llewellyn (Senior Engineer), C. Forbes-Thompson (Interim Head of Democratic Services), E. Sullivan (Senior Committee Services Officer) and R. Barrett (Committee Services Officer)

Also present:

Councillor K. Etheridge (Blackwood Local Ward Member)

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors A.G. Higgs, A. Hussey, S. Kent and J. Ridgewell.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

3. MINUTES - 18TH SEPTEMBER 2018

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Regeneration and Environment Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 18th September 2018 (minute nos. 1 - 10) 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 noted the contents of the reports from Councillors S. Morgan, N. George and Mrs E. Stenner, which provided an update on their respective portfolios, and had been circulated to Members in advance of the meeting.

The report from Councillor S. Morgan (Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Economy, Infrastructure and Sustainability) provided an update on developments in respect of Town Centre Events, Tourism, Town Centre Management, Community Regeneration, the Regeneration Project Board, the Ystrad Mynach Masterplan, A Foundation for Success, the Engineering Projects Group, the Highway Operations Group and the Transportation Engineering Group.

In referring to A Foundation for Success (the Council's framework for the future regeneration of the county borough) a Member queried if the Council had undertaken a review of its regeneration strategies. The Cabinet Member confirmed that he would take the enquiry back to Officers for comment. A Member also commented on the need for a focused strategy to encourage development across the north of the county borough. Clarification was sought on the increase in visitor numbers for Caerphilly Castle in light of the new Gilberts Maze and Dragon's Lair attractions and the Cabinet Member explained that although he did not have exact numbers to hand, a significant uplift in attendance figures had been recorded.

In response to a query on a recent temporary closure of the Llanbradach arm of the Pwllypant roundabout at short notice, the Cabinet Member explained that this was because survey works had identified the need for an emergency repair due to a dislodged joint on the road surface. Reference was made to traders who had reported a loss in business as a result of the Pwllypant works and the Cabinet Member confirmed that advice has been given in respect of the process for applying for temporary rate relief.

The report from Councillor N. George (Cabinet Member for Neighbourhood Services) outlined Waste Management developments, including the success of the kerbside recycling service which (which is currently achieving a recycling rate of 72% and is now in its 20th year. Efforts are also being made to improve food waste recycling rate. The Building Cleaning Team were congratulated on winning the National Category in the "Loo of the Year Awards 2018".

Members were updated on developments across Sport and Community Leisure, with it noted that the Sports Development team were instrumental in a 100% completion rate of the Sport Wales National School Sport Survey across Caerphilly schools. There were over 3700 visits to the summer holiday Sports Schemes, which proved to be the most successful summer ever for the Service. Consultation has now concluded in respect of the Draft Sport and Active Recreation Strategy and a report will be presented to a special meeting of the Regeneration and Environment Scrutiny Committee on 8th November

2018 and thereafter Cabinet. Across Parks and Countryside, clearance works have taken place following Storm Callum, and further to the Tree Strategy adopted by Cabinet last year, a second Arboricultural Officer has been appointed, together with further appointments within the operations area due to increased tree works. In response to a Member's query on responsibility for tree maintenance, it was explained that trees are assessed on a case-by-case basis in accordance with the Tree Strategy and that arrangements would be made to forward a copy of this Strategy to the Member. The Scrutiny Committee also noted the recent Cabinet approval for the formal dedication of the War Memorial in Cwmfelinfach as part of the Centenary Fields Programme.

The report from Councillor Mrs E. Stenner (Cabinet Member for Environment and Public Protection) outlined developments across Strategic Planning, with it noted that the Council have presented their response to Welsh Government following their call for evidence on housing delivery through the planning system and are awaiting the outcome of the process. Good progress is being made on the Strategic Development Plan (SDP) and a report outlining developments and the way forward will be brought to Council in due course. Across Development Management, the Council's third Annual Performance Report is being prepared for consideration by the Planning Committee and outlines the challenges being faced in respect of the need to maintain high quality service in view of reducing resources, as well as the need to address the shortage in the Council's housing land supply. A review of the development management process is also underway with a view to improving the service.

The Cabinet Member also highlighted developments across Public Protection. A number of Officers from Trading Standards and Environmental Health recently attending a WLGA event on Brexit and Public Protection and the Council's Registration Service are participating in a pilot European Settlement scheme. The Catering Service are carrying out work relating to Free School Meal eligibility in view of Universal Credit changes and are progressing cashless catering across a number of primary schools.

A Member referred to the lack of a five year land supply and queried whether City Deal funding would be made available to reinstate brownfield sites for development. Officers explained that the housing investment fund is available in this regard and that they are continuing to lobby Welsh Government for land contamination. They also emphasised the importance of sufficient funding to unlock the development potential for these sites.

A Member commented on the difficulties in encouraging housing developers to build in the Upper Rhymney Valley and queried whether there was potential to redirect developers in line with land allocation policy. The Head of Regeneration and Planning explained that all planning applications have to be considered in line with the requirements of the Adopted Local Development Plan (LDP) and other material considerations (which is in place until 2021). Members were advised that although there were land allocations contained within the Replacement LDP, the document was subsequently withdrawn by Council in October 2016. Therefore the contents of the Replacement LDP (including any land allocation figures) have no bearing or relevance for current planning applications. The matter of location and demand will be addressed in the Council's new LDP arising from the progression of the SDP. In response to a supplementary question from the Member, it was explained that there are a number of sites available across the county borough, including the north, but that these are not attracting development from the private sector due to the inability to make sufficient profits on new house sales.

The Cabinet Members were thanked for their reports.

6. 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) for the period October 2018 to June 2019. The FWP included all reports that were identified at the Scrutiny Committee meeting on 18th September 2018. Members were asked to consider the FWP alongside the Cabinet Work Programme as appended to the report and to suggest any changes.

Members discussed the potential deferment of the Review of Tourism/Town Centre Events Programme report to 11th December 2018, and in view of the maximum of four items on this agenda, agreed that the report on Charges for Wheelie Bins be rescheduled to 12th February 2019 (should the Events report be deferred).

Subject to the foregoing amendment, it was unanimously agreed that the revised Forward Work Programme be published on the Council's website.

7. CABINET REPORTS

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

8. NOTICE OF MOTION – SPORT AND ACTIVE RECREATION STRATEGY (SARS 2019-2029)

Councillor K. Etheridge presented a Notice of Motion in respect of the Sport and Active Recreation Strategy 2019-2029 , which requested that:-

“We the undersigned elected members call on the Regeneration and Environment Scrutiny Committee to make a recommendation to Cabinet which we understand will be discussed on 14th November 2018 that the whole strategy is referred to Full Council for debate and vote by all elected members in the interests of openness and transparency. We acknowledge the strength of feeling and the campaign against the proposals to rationalise leisure centres, a campaign which has achieved cross party support, support of 2 former MPs and the current MP within the Islwyn Parliamentary Constituency.

The ongoing petition currently contains 5000 signatures in respect of retaining sites at Cefn Forest and Blackwood, and currently lists a number of signatures from the following wards; Argoed, Penmaen, Pengam, Aberbargoed, Pontllanfraith, Ynysddu, Blackwood, New Tredegar, Abercarn, Newbridge, Risca East, Maesycwmmmer, Ystrad Mynach and Cefn Forest.

We ask the Committee to consider this motion and request should they agree to request that Cabinet refer the matter to Full Council”.

The Scrutiny Committee considered the merits of the Notice of Motion and were advised that in relation to the decision-making process, the decision on whether or not to adopt the Sport and Active Recreation Strategy is an executive function of Cabinet, but Cabinet do have the discretion to refer such matters to Council.

Following discussion on its contents, it was therefore moved and seconded that the Notice of Motion be supported. By a show of hands this was unanimously agreed.

RECOMMENDED to Cabinet that the Draft Sport and Active Recreation Strategy

2019-29 being considered on 14th November 2018 be referred to Council for approval.

REPORTS OF OFFICERS

Consideration was given to the following reports.

9. REVIEW OF TOURISM/TOWN CENTRE EVENTS PROGRAMME

In view of the need for further consultation with community councils on the contents of the report, the Scrutiny Committee unanimously agreed that the item be deferred to their next meeting (12th February 2019).

10. DELIVERY OF "STREET SCENE" SERVICES WITHIN CAERPHILLY COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

Mike Headington (Green Spaces and Transport Services Manager) and Hayley Jones (Waste Strategy and Operations Manager), presented the report, which updated Members on the outcomes and findings of the Street Scene Working Group.

Members were reminded of the previous report presented to the Scrutiny Committee in February 2018 which proposed 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 (such as green space maintenance and cleansing). Cross-party representation was received, comprising of Councillors R. Gough (Chair), J. Ridgewell, W. Williams, T.J. Williams and A. Hussey. In total, 4 meetings of the Working Group were held between April and September 2018, with the observations and findings of the Group set out in the report. Several recommendations arising from the meetings of the Working Group were also detailed in the report for consideration by the Scrutiny Committee.

The Scrutiny Committee noted the varied range of topics discussed at the Working Group meetings. One Member suggested that it would have been useful to receive more examples of "street scene" scenarios during the APSE presentation given at the second meeting. Overall however it was felt that a large amount of ground was covered in regards to the review of service provision.

A Member sought clarification on the recommendation which proposed a whole-authority approach for responsibility in relation to fly tipping. Officers explained that staff in Council vehicles will be encouraged to collect any items they see discarded, instead of logging a call for collection at a later time. Further information was also sought in regards to the weed spraying regime and it was noted that this is undertaken twice a year in April and September. Members highlighted inconsistencies in regards to weed spraying in their wards and were encouraged to report any problem areas to Officers. Reference was made to a reduction in grass cutting regimes and other parks/grounds service reductions as a result of significant savings made to date and Members were reminded of the importance of managing and readjusting their own and public expectations in view of the financial savings already made and the need to make future MTFP savings.

The Scrutiny Committee expressed their thanks to all Officers and Members who had participated in the work of the Street Scene Working Group.

Following consideration of the report, it was moved and seconded that the following recommendations from the Working Group be supported. By a show of hands, this was

unanimously agreed.

RESOLVED that:-

- (1) If grass cutting schedules (particularly around vision splays) are reviewed, consideration be given to highway safety should the frequency of cuts be reduced.
- (2) More pro-active enforcement be undertaken regarding littering, dog fouling and fly tipping.
- (3) An information bulletin be sent to advise 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 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 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) A further street scene update report be 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. FUTURE LIGHTING AND ENERGY SAVING PROPOSALS

Marcus Lloyd (Head of Infrastructure) presented the report, which provided updated future lighting and energy savings proposals and a number of revised options for consideration, in view of energy price increases for 2018/19 being significantly higher than anticipated. The views and comments of the Scrutiny Committee were sought on the updated energy savings proposals, prior to consideration by Cabinet.

Members were reminded of the previous report presented to the Regeneration and Environment Scrutiny Committee on 15th May 2018 and their subsequent recommendations to Cabinet in respect of future lighting options (as set out in Section 2.2 of the report). Following presentation of the original report, the Authority received their electricity supplier invoice for 2018/19, with the unit rate having significantly increased compared to 2017/18 (a total increase of 13.4%), and which is greater than the originally anticipated cost. The increased charges will require additional funding of £165,000 from the Communities Directorate infrastructure budget, for which no allowance has been made, and therefore has necessitated revised options to achieve street lighting energy savings that could contribute to the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP).

The Scrutiny Committee were therefore asked to again review and provide comments on the revised street lighting energy savings options as set out in Section 4.5.3 to 4.5.5 and Appendix 1 of the report. Each option highlighted the number of units affected, implementation cost, CO₂ and kWh energy savings, and annual financial savings (including payback periods). It was noted that in the view of Officers, the most beneficial approach would be to progress a wholesale conversion of the street lighting stock to LED

lanterns and implement part-night lighting to all lighting except junctions and major town centres (Option 3).

During the course of the debate, and in response to a Member's query, Officers confirmed that Salix funding is still available but explained that any delay in submitting a bid could place limitations on the deliverability of the proposed options. Discussion took place regarding the feasibility of using renewable energy sources, such as solar and wind energy, to power street lighting. Officers explained that they have explored alternatives to see if the Authority can generate their own power, and that solar power is not currently a viable option due to the high cost involved in changing the street lighting columns, but that alternative technologies will continue to be reviewed and monitored to identify options to further reduce energy consumption. Following suggestions from Members, it was agreed that a report on the use of Council-owned land to generate renewable energy be brought to a future meeting of the Committee for their consideration.

The Committee discussed a number of alternative savings options, including the use of central management system (CMS) technology, preset dimmers and motion detectors, and Officers explained that each of these avenues had been explored but that the options presented to Committee were the four most beneficial options in respect of the future street lighting approach. Clarification was provided on the part-night lighting times (12.00 midnight to 05.30am) and during discussion on whether these times could be reduced or realigned, Members were advised that any reductions in timing would be detrimental to the level of budget savings. Officers also responded to queries on the specifics of the impact arising from each proposal and confirmed that major town centres are those aligned with the Council's Town Centre Management model (Bargoed, Blackwood, Caerphilly, Risca and Ystrad Mynach).

Following consideration of the report, it was moved and seconded in turn that Options 1 and 3 as set out in the report be supported. By a show of hands, Members unanimously supported Option 1 (convert all lanterns to LED), and by the majority present (and in noting there were 2 against), supported Option 3 (convert all lighting to LED and implement part-night lighting to all lighting except junctions and major town centres). The Committee unanimously agreed that they were unable to support Options 2 and 4 as set out in the report.

In view of the foregoing it was therefore

RECOMMENDED to Cabinet that Options 1 and 3 as set out in the report be selected as the preferred approaches to the future lighting and energy savings proposals.

12. HIGHWAY MAINTENANCE PLAN

Marcus Lloyd (Head of Infrastructure) presented the report, which sought Member's views on the new Highway Maintenance Plan (HMP), prior to its presentation for Cabinet for approval.

It was noted by the Scrutiny Committee that the Highways Act 1980 places a duty on local authorities to have a fully documented and approved maintenance plan and approach. The Highway Maintenance Plan (HMP) as appended to the report provides an overarching document for Carriageways, Footways, Street Lighting and Structures. It 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 also forms the basis of the Council's legal defence against insurance claims, both with personal injury and property/ vehicular damage, made on the highway. The HMP has been developed taking into consideration the recommendations of the new Code of Practice, "Well-Managed

Highway Infrastructure”, and as part of this process, the whole of the Council’s highway network has been assessed.

Members were therefore asked to comment on the content of the HMP prior to its presentation to Cabinet and to support the use of this methodology for future highway maintenance activities. Furthermore, the Scrutiny Committee were asked to support the changes already identified for the network inspection as set out in Appendix 2 of the report. Members’ attention was also directed to the proposal identified in 4.12 to amend the maximum intervention timeframe for repair of non-emergency defects (from 28 days to 42 days), with the timeframe for repair of emergency defects remaining unchanged.

Reference was made to the classification of repairs and whether the depth of potholes would be a deciding factor in whether or not these are urgent or non-urgent repairs. Members were referred to the Defect Intervention Levels as set out in Appendix 3 of the reports and explained that this inspection criteria would be applied to all defects. Officers outlined the composition of road surfaces and explained that if the defect breaches the sub-layer of tarmac, this will be classified as an urgent repair due to the depth exceeding the intervention criteria and that further deterioration would likely escalate quickly. Discussion also took place regarding traffic counts as set out in the ACOP hierarchy reviews 2018 contained within the HMP.

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 new Highway Maintenance Plan as appended to the report be implemented in order to support the use of the Code of Practice methodology for future highway maintenance activities.
- (ii) The changes already identified for the network inspection as highlighted in Appendix 2 of the report be approved;
- (ii) The proposals to amend the timeframe for repair of non-emergency defects as identified in 4.12 and for the timeframe for repair of emergency defects to remain unchanged, be approved.

Members thanked the Officers in attendance for their presentations and for responding to the queries raised during the course of the meeting.

The meeting closed at 6.55 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 11th December 2018, they were signed by the Chair.

CHAIR