



REGENERATION AND ENVIRONMENT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD AT PENALLTA HOUSE, YSTRAD MYNACH
ON TUESDAY, 11TH DECEMBER 2018 AT 5.30 P.M.**

PRESENT:

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

Councillors:

C. Elsbury, R.W. Gough, A.G. Higgs, A. Hussey, S. Kent, Ms P. Leonard, J. Ridgewell, J. Scriven, G. Simmonds, A. Whitcombe, T.J. Williams, W. Williams, B. Zaplatynski

Cabinet Members:

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

Together with:

M.S. Williams (Interim Corporate Director of Communities), R. Hartshorn (Head of Public Protection, Community & Leisure Services), R. Kyte (Head of Regeneration and Planning), D. Lucas (Team Leader Strategic and Development Planning), P. Hudson (Marketing and Events Manager), C. Edwards (Environmental Health Manager), J. Williams (Senior Solicitor), C. Evans (Interim Scrutiny Officer) and R. Barrett (Committee Services Officer)

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors J. Bevan and Mrs E. Stenner (Cabinet Member for Environment and Public Protection).

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Clarification was sought on whether those Members who are also community or town councillors should declare an interest for Agenda Item 8 (Review of Tourism/Town Centre Events Programme). It was confirmed that this would be classed as a personal interest at most and it would be a matter for each individual Member to decide whether or not they wished to declare an interest.

Declarations of interest were received from Councillor Mrs P. Leonard and R. Barrett (Committee Services Officer) in respect of Agenda Item 8. Details are minuted with the respective item.

3. MINUTES - 30TH OCTOBER 2018

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Regeneration and Environment Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 30th October 2018 (minute nos. 1 - 12) 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 Business Support and Funding, Urban Renewal, Strategic Planning, the Engineering Projects Group, the Highway Operations Group and the Transportation Engineering Group.

In response to a query relating to Business Support and Funding, the Cabinet Member outlined details of the criteria and level of take-up associated with the Business Start up Grant. Reference was made to the retail surveys undertaken as part of the Annual Monitoring Report and it was agreed that Officers would circulate a spreadsheet following the meeting to show the occupancy status of individual retail units.

In response to a Member's query, it was confirmed that the Council are waiting for an update on Stagecoach following their electric bus trial. Reference was made to the completion of the Pwllypant roundabout works and a Member cited media reports of a budget overspend and delays in the completion period. Officers explained that these issues were due to circumstances including extreme weather events which put the works behind schedule, and alterations to the contractor working arrangements. Another Member praised the standard of the roundabout works and the reduction in travel time since its completion. The Committee also discussed the Discovery Gateways being promoted by WG Valley's Task Force (Cwmcarn Forest and Caerphilly Castle) and whether there was scope for WG to include other sites from across the county borough.

The report from Councillor N. George (Cabinet Member for Neighbourhood Services) provided updates regarding the Sport and Active Recreation Strategy, the National School Sport Survey, Heolddu Leisure Centre's recent achievement of QUEST accreditation, the Annual Sports Caerphilly Awards recently held in Bryn Meadows, and an update on food waste and household recycling initiatives which are continuing to meet WG recycling targets.

The Committee discussed recycling initiatives and potential income-generating options, and in response to a query on whether there had been an increase in food waste recycling rates following the recent door stepping campaign, the Cabinet Member explained that this is difficult to ascertain at this time and that the main purpose of this initiative had been to encourage and educate more residents to begin recycling their food waste.

In that Councillor Mrs E. Stenner (Cabinet Member for Environment and Public Protection) had given apologies for the meeting, the Scrutiny Committee noted the contents of her report, which provided updates across Trading Standards, Licensing, Environmental Health and Catering Services. The Committee were pleased to learn that Kerry Williams (Peripatetic Cook in Charge) recently achieved the Unison Award 2016/17, as a result of her hard work and contribution to the successful amalgamation of two school kitchens to form Islwyn High School. Members requested that their congratulations to Kerry be placed on record.

The Cabinet Members were thanked for their reports.

6. REGENERATION AND ENVIRONMENT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME

Charlotte Evans (Interim Scrutiny Officer) presented the report, which outlined details of the Regeneration and Environment Scrutiny Committee Forward Work Programme (FWP) for the period December 2018 to July 2019. The FWP included all reports that were identified at the Scrutiny Committee meeting on 30th October 2018. Members were asked to consider the FWP alongside the Cabinet Work Programme as appended to the report and to suggest any changes.

It was agreed that the Hafod-Yr-Ynys Air Quality Action Plan report (listed under date to be confirmed) be scheduled as an agenda item for 25th June 2019. Members also discussed the special Scrutiny Committee scheduled for 18th December 2018 to consider the MTFP proposals and were in agreement that the meeting start time be brought forward to 5.00pm to maximise the time available for discussion.

There were no further changes, and subject to the foregoing addition, 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.

REPORTS OF OFFICERS

Consideration was given to the following reports.

8. REVIEW OF TOURISM/ TOWN CENTRE EVENTS PROGRAMME

Councillor Mrs P. Leonard declared a personal interest in this item as a shop owner in Risca and as a member of Risca East Community Council, and remained in the meeting during consideration of the item.

R. Barrett (Committee Services Officer) declared a personal interest in this item, being an events steward for the Authority, and left the meeting during consideration of the report. C. Evans (Interim Scrutiny Officer) minuted this item in her absence.

The report provided the Scrutiny Committee with information and sought the views on the proposed options for future delivery and re-profiling of the tourism events programme. The report also requested that the Scrutiny Committee make recommendations for consideration by Cabinet as part of the 2019/20 budget proposals. The report provided

information on the existing event programme organised and supported by the Destination and Events Team within the Council and proposed a number of options that can deliver against the requirements of the MTFP to reduce budgets.

In support of the Council's 'Unique Places' model of Town Centre Management, the Events programme has more recently focussed on delivering events, where practical, in the heart of our principal town centres at Caerphilly, Blackwood, Bargoed, Ystrad Mynach and Risca. The report focussed on the 15 events delivered and supported through the 2018/19 Destination and Events service budget of £125,902, supplemented by an additional £12,000 from central funds to deliver the Bargoed Ice Rink.

The Committee were also referred to the summary of responses received from Town/Community Councils as appended to the report, and asked to note additional feedback from Bargoed Town Council and Gelligaer Community Council received since the publication of the agenda papers, with a copy of this feedback tabled at the meeting.

The Scrutiny Committee thanked the Officers for the report and discussion ensued.

A Member, in noting the recent increase in footfall, raised queries around the implications of this increase on the town centres. Officers explained that there can be distortions to the footfall statistics, which are impacted by weather, however it was noted that the increase in footfall during events will increase visitor spend in and around the town centres.

Discussions took place around the level of support Events Staff could provide to Town or Community Councils for events, should the Town or Community Council wish to continue with the events. Officers explained that advice and support could be offered to existing events, the management and funding of which would be the responsibility of Town/Community Councils, provided that there is availability from Events Staff, and on a phased basis.

The Scrutiny Committee considered each of the 3 recommendations in order to recommend one course of action to Cabinet, having regard for section 3.4 of the report which outlined the pressures on the Authority's budget for 2019/20 and beyond and noting that option 10.1 was proposed within the draft Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP).

Following consideration and discussion, it was moved and seconded that recommendation 10.1 in the report be recommended to Cabinet. By a show of hands this was unanimously agreed.

RESOLVED that for the reasons contained in the Officers report and as outlined at the meeting, it be recommended to Cabinet to continue to run the events set out in the "retain" column of table 3, along with the regional tourism events. This would lead to direct budget savings of circa £47,494 which would contribute to the MTFP. Also that the events team would continue to offer advice and guidance to Community/Town Councils that wish to continue funding and running other events.

Following this item the Committee took a short recess at 6.20pm and reconvened at 6.25pm.

9. DRAFT YSTRAD MYNACH MASTERPLAN

Dave Lucas (Team Leader Strategic and Development Planning) presented the report, which sought the views of Members on the contents of the Draft Ystrad Mynach Masterplan, prior to presentation to Cabinet to seek endorsement of the Masterplan as

the basis for a public consultation exercise commencing 28th January 2019 to 8th March 2019.

It was explained that in order to benefit from the transformative change in the wider Cardiff Capital Region with the investment of City Deal, the Valleys Taskforce and further funding streams, it is necessary to set out the strategic priorities for the regeneration and enhancement of Caerphilly County Borough. The Valleys Task Force Initiative (VTF) has identified Caerphilly / Ystrad Mynach as one of seven Strategic Hubs in the South Wales Valleys, with £25m of Welsh Government funding being made available to create these seven Hubs. The Hubs will act as a focus for public money and provide opportunities for the private sector to invest and create new jobs through existing business growth and the promotion of new business start-ups.

The Draft Ystrad Mynach Masterplan is the next of the suite of Masterplans to be prepared under the overarching regeneration strategy for the county borough 'A Foundation for Success', following on from the Caerphilly Basin Masterplan approved by Council in July 2018. The Masterplan forms part of the implementation plan for 'A Foundation for Success' and will be reviewed every five years. The Masterplan identifies investment and development opportunities within the Ystrad Mynach part of the Strategic Hub and seeks to build on the existing strengths of Ystrad Mynach to ensure that the area enhances its role as a business, employment, service, retail and sporting centre. In line with the agreed governance arrangements, the Regeneration Project Board will prioritise projects and proposals for consideration by Cabinet and therefore delivery will be dependent on decisions made by Cabinet.

It was noted that subject to Cabinet endorsement, a public consultation exercise on the Draft Ystrad Mynach Masterplan was proposed for the period 28th January to 8th March 2019. Once the consultation period has concluded, all comments will be considered and changes will be made to the Masterplan where appropriate, and the revised Masterplan will subsequently be reported to Full Council for formal approval.

Discussion took place regarding the potential development of a rail service from Ystrad Mynach to Merthyr as part of the City Deal Metro project. Officers confirmed that the former regional transport body SEWTA, had carried out a review of its rail strategy and that commuter demand has been identified for this particular route. Bringing back passenger services on this line would involve reinstating stations along the route and potentially extending the line up to Dowlais Top in Merthyr Tydfil.

In response to a query on the provision of new housing developments identified in the Masterplan and if this would include adapted housing for elderly people, Officers explained that the Council undertakes Local Housing Market Assessments which will examine the housing provision for elderly people and where need is identified. In response to Members' queries, it was confirmed that the Masterplan is initially set for 5 years and the funding will run for that period. After that time, a review will be carried out to identify the long term schemes and short term aspirations that need to be brought forward. In response to Members' queries and comments, Officers also outlined how the Council will work with the Valleys Taskforce to maximise the funding that is available to them and how this will be applied to the areas in greatest need.

A Member suggested that the proposal to expand upon the programme of events within the area (as part of the strategic objective to create a vibrant and accessible visitor destination) could be viewed as contradictory to the proposed rationalisation of the Council's Events programme. Officers explained that this objective relates to supporting a range of other partners in addition to the Council and that the Masterplan contains a number of long-term aspirations. It was also queried whether there are plans to develop a resort hotel in the area to accommodate visitors and Officers explained that they are working with partners in this regard to identify a suitable site.

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 Draft Ystrad Mynach Masterplan as appended to the report be endorsed as the basis for a public consultation exercise commencing 28th January 2019 until 8th March 2019.

10. DRAFT LOCAL TOILETS STRATEGY

Ceri Edwards (Environmental Health Manager) presented a detailed overview of the report, which informed Members of the draft Caerphilly County Borough Local Toilets Strategy and invited comments as part of the consultation process agreed by Cabinet.

Members were advised that Part 8 of the Public Health (Wales) Act 2017: Provision of Toilets came into force on 31 May 2018 and places a duty on each local authority in Wales to prepare and publish a local toilets strategy for its area within a year of this date. Local authorities in Wales now have the responsibility to assess the need for toilet provision for their communities, plan to meet those needs, produce a local toilets strategy, and review the strategy, update and publicise revisions.

It was emphasised to Members that the duty to prepare a local toilets strategy does not require local authorities to provide and maintain public toilets directly. The Local Authority must take a strategic view on how facilities can be provided and accessed by their local population. Upon review of this strategy, Caerphilly County Borough Council is required to publish a statement of progress. The strategy should contribute toward achieving accessible and clean toilets wherever people live, work or visit.

The Committee were referred to the draft Strategy set out at Appendix 2 which incorporates feedback following a public consultation as part of the Needs Assessment that was undertaken throughout September 2018. 357 responses had been received and the analysis of responses were detailed in the consultation document appended to the Officer's report. These responses were used to inform the content of the draft Strategy, with a summary document prepared for public consultation and included at Appendix 1. It was agreed by Cabinet on 28th November 2018 that a formal consultation exercise on the draft Local Toilets Strategy be undertaken between December 2018 and February 2019.

Members noted the list set out in the draft Strategy which detailed the location of toilets at Council-owned premises available for public use, together with local private retailers who wished to be included in the Strategy. It was explained that Officers had contacted national retailers during the Needs Assessment period and whilst the majority indicated they were content for the general public to continue using their facilities, they did not wish to formally participate in the Strategy for varying reasons. The Committee were advised that in view of the MTFP proposals to remove the Council's portfolio of toilet blocks across the whole of the authority, it is therefore important to consider alternative provision and how local toilet provision can be maximised.

During the course of the debate, a Member suggested ways in which businesses could be incentivised to open up their facilities for public use or improve their facilities for public use. Officers explained that there would be a need to give consideration to accessibility and security requirements and avoid those where the public need to walk through private areas to access toilets. With regards to improvements, this would be a choice/matter for the building owner.

A Member referred to the previous Community Toilet Grant Scheme introduced by WG and expressed the need for a funding commitment from WG in order to allow Councils to provide public toilet facilities. Officers explained that this former scheme had seen very little uptake and there had been stringent conditions applied in order to qualify for the grant. It was reiterated that there is no requirement for the Council to provide toilets but that the Strategy places a moral duty on them to examine alternative provision. The Committee discussed also some of the obstacles towards businesses and organisations being able to offer their facilities for public use. Officers explained that they are happy to work with any partners that may want to come forward in this regard.

Members expressed concerns that many residents are or may become increasingly isolated and home-bound due to the lack of available public toilet provision and the potential for further toilet closures. They also voiced concerns regarding future footfall impact across some town centres given the lack of facilities available. Officers explained that they have held discussions with WG regarding the lack of planning policy support at a national level in relation to toilet provision and access, and offered to relay the comments of the Committee to WG if they so wished.

A Member asked if the proposed smartphone mapping app to show the location of toilets could be incorporated into the Council's website. Officers confirmed that they would explore this with the IT development team. In response to a query, Officers explained that no feedback had been received from Visit Wales regarding the draft Strategy, but that they would check on whether they have engaged with WG at a national level.

Having considered and discussed the contents of the draft Local Toilets Strategy, the Scrutiny Committee expressed disappointment and concern regarding current policy in respect of toilet provision. They were of the view that the lack of a statutory duty for the Council to provide toilets will lead to a negative impact on town centre footfall across the county borough and could potentially discriminate against certain groups within society. They were also unanimous in voicing a need for more positive action to be undertaken in respect of planning policy support for toilet provision, and asked that these comments be relayed to Welsh Government and noted as part of the consultation process.

In closing, the Chair wished those in attendance the compliments of the season and thanked Members and Officers for their contributions to the work of the Committee during the past year.

The meeting closed at 7.20 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 12th February 2019, they were signed by the Chair.

CHAIR