



SPECIAL REGENERATION AND ENVIRONMENT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD AT PENALLTA HOUSE, YSTRAD MYNACH ON
THURSDAY, 4TH SEPTEMBER 2014 AT 5.30 P.M.**

PRESENT:

Councillor D.T. Davies - Chair
Councillor Mrs E.M. Aldworth - Vice-Chair

Councillors:

J. Bevan, Mrs A. Blackman, C.J. Cuss, C. Elsbury, R.W. Gough, Ms J.G. Jones, S. Kent,
Mrs P. Leonard, M.J. Prew, Mrs D. Price, A. Rees.

Cabinet Members:

K. James (Regeneration, Planning and Sustainable Development), D.V. Poole (Community
and Leisure Services), T.J. Williams (Highways, Transportation and Engineering).

Together with:

S. Aspinall (Acting Deputy Chief Executive), R. Hartshorn (Head of Public Protection),
C. Edwards (Environmental Health Manager), M. Lewis (Principal Catering Officer), J. Morgan
(Trading Standards, Licensing and Registrars Manager), K. Peters (Community Safety
Manager), J. Jones (Democratic Services Manager) and R. Barrett (Committee Services
Officer).

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors R.T. Davies, N. Dix and
Mrs E. Stenner.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

REPORTS OF OFFICERS

Consideration was given to the following report.

3. PUBLIC PROTECTION DIVISION MEDIUM FINANCIAL PLAN 2015/16 AND 2016/17 – ITEMS FOR CONSIDERATION

Sandra Aspinall, Acting Deputy Chief Executive, introduced the report, with Members reminded that this meeting continued the round of special Scrutiny meetings relating to the budget planning process for 2015/16 and 2016/17.

The report sought Members' comments on the suggested Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) contributions from the Public Protection division, containing a range of savings options and efficiencies for this area, in accordance with the Cabinet report of 16th April 2014 ("Next Stages of the MTFP – 2015/16 & 2016/17").

Members were advised that the report contained a number of options relating to discretionary areas, with the aim to seek their initial views on the savings and efficiencies for the next two financial years. It was reiterated that Members were not being asked to determine cuts to services at this meeting, and that definitive proposals would emerge at a later point in 2014 for consideration at that time.

Rob Hartshorn, Head of Public Protection, presented the report detailing options for savings and efficiencies for his area. Four discretionary service areas for review had been identified, namely the Community Safety CCTV Control Room, Community Safety Wardens, the Health Improvement Team and Civic Catering, with full details of each option included in the report.

In addition, the discretionary element of school meal provision was considered in the report, together with options relating to discretionary savings on statutory services, as well as detailing savings arising in 2015/16 from proposals already implemented. The proposals for each of these areas were detailed in turn, together with contributions from Officers within the Public Protection Management Team.

The first element of savings options for the Public Protection division related to the Community Safety CCTV Control Room. The Head of Public Protection detailed the current remit of the service and outlined to Members the work carried out by CCTV Control Room staff. It was explained to Members that there had been significant investment to the service, with £200,000 investment in the CCTV system over the last 3 years and a £75,000 upgrade to the monitoring system carried out in the current year.

The report outlined 4 savings options for consideration, which included closing the CCTV control room, retaining CCTV cameras in main towns only, introducing single staff night shifts Sunday-Thursday, removing the CCTV Mobile Vehicle Operator post, and moving the CCTV image data transfer from BT lines to the Public Sector Broadband Aggregation (PBSA) network. Estimated savings ranged from £5,500 to £515,000 depending on the option selected, with the impact of each of these options outlined to Members.

A query was raised regarding the recharging of Gwent Police for costs associated with CCTV requests and enquiries. The Head of Public Protection explained that the value of this service to the police force had been recognised and thus he had recently written to Gwent Police to explore the matter further. He added that, however, the force were facing their own budgetary restrictions and anticipated that they would also be dealing with similar recharge requests from other local authorities. Members requested that the Head of Public Protection and Cabinet Member for Community and Leisure arrange to meet with Gwent Police to confirm their position

Kath Peters, Community Safety Manager, confirmed with Members that the quality of CCTV images would not be affected by a move to the PBSA network. She explained that there would be a slight delay in the transfer of images but that the network was successfully utilised by a number of other authorities. It was explained that the system used less storage and was more flexible, allowing for the use of additional CCTV cameras.

Concerns were raised regarding the impact of the proposal to decommission CCTV cameras in smaller towns and villages and queried whether it would be possible to turn them back on once taken out of use. The Community Safety Manager confirmed that the cameras could not be left in situ as this would be contrary to the Information Commissioner's guidelines and therefore the cameras would have to be removed if they were decommissioned. Members were also advised that any subsequent replacement cameras might have to be updated in line with new technology.

Members queried the possibility of consulting on the proposed options with external partners such as Gwent Police, using the Crime and Disorder Scrutiny Committee as an appropriate forum. It was clarified that the role of that Committee was to scrutinise the Safer Caerphilly Community Safety Partnership outcomes, whereas the Policy and Resources Scrutiny Committee scrutinises internal Council services. The possibility of selling Community Safety CCTV services to the private sector was also queried by Members, with Officers confirming that this was a possibility that could be explored further.

Following discussion of the proposals, Members felt unable to support Option 1 (close the CCTV Control Room), Option 2 (Remove the CCTV Mobile Vehicle Operator Post), Option 3 (Single staff night shifts Sun-Thurs), and Option 4 (remove CCTV mobile vehicle operator post). Members requested an update on the bid for capital funding to implement Option 5 (move image data transfer to PSBA network).

The next element of suggested savings related to Community Safety Wardens and proposed three options for Members' consideration – withdraw the Community Safety Warden Service completely, reduce Community Safety Warden cover by withdrawing service on Sundays, or reduce Community Safety Warden service by reducing shift coverage. Estimated savings ranged from £40,000 to £355,000.

Members were advised of the significant community role carried out by the Community Safety staff, with the impact and effect of each of the three options proposed outlined to Members. It was advised that whilst the Authority had a statutory duty to address crime and disorder issues, the supply of Community Safety Wardens was not a statutory requirement.

Members discussed the proposals in detail and praised the work of the Community Safety Wardens, adding that they provided a valued service within the county borough and that they would not wish to see a reduction in staffing to the service.

The proposed option to withdraw the Sunday service was queried, with Members asking how this could impact on weekend events such as the Big Cheese. It was explained that any associated costs and arrangements, including that of alternative safety provision, would be outlined to Members at a subsequent MTFP meeting, should this proposal be taken forward for future consideration.

Members queried the reduction of staff hours outlined within Option 3 (to reduce the service by altering shift patterns). The Head of Public Protection clarified that such a reduction could be implemented in a number of ways and that discussions would firstly need to take place with staff and their trade union representatives. Officers also clarified the current shift patterns and the types of community engagement carried out by the Community Safety Wardens.

Following detailed discussion of the proposals, Members established that they did not want to lose the Community Safety Warden service and wished for it to remain in its current format. They therefore felt unable to support the 3 options listed (withdraw the Community Safety Warden Service completely, reduce cover by withdrawing Sunday service, and reduce the service by altering shift patterns). Members understood that consultation would take place between staff and trade unions regarding Options 2 and 3 if implemented.

The next element of savings options related to the Health Improvement Team, with the Head of Public Protection detailing the various health issues within the county borough and the work of the Health Improvement Team in co-ordinating strategies to address these problems. Members were informed that part of the Team's remit of work includes the promotion of the corporate health agenda to improve the health and well-being of CCBC employees.

The option within the report was outlined whereby the non-grant funded Health Improvement Officer posts be deleted, which would bring about savings of £150,000. It was explained to Members that there were originally 3.6 full-time-equivalent posts for consideration within the report but that a vacancy had since arisen in the team for the 0.6 post. Members were advised that the deletion of the 0.6 element only would bring about a saving of £22,000.

Ceri Edwards, Environmental Health Manager, added that the Health Improvement Team were very dedicated and skilled and were responsible for strategically setting their own improvement objectives and workloads. She outlined a number of examples of the work of the Team, and detailed an instance when the Team were carrying out corporate health screening and had identified that an employee was suffering from a potentially life-threatening health condition. Members were informed that in addition to improving lifestyles and engaging with communities, the Team were also tackling the issue of lower life expectancy in certain areas of the county borough.

Discussion of this proposal ensued and Members made reference to the impending Public Health and Future Generations Bills detail in the report. It was clarified that the new Bills would introduce new legislation and subsequently increased responsibilities for health and well being for the Council. It was also confirmed that the Team did not anticipate that there would be any additional funding to address the new legislation.

Members queried if additional staff would have to be recruited to deal with the new legislation if the non-funded Health Improvement posts were to be deleted, with it confirmed that it was likely that such legislation would have to be dealt with at a strategic level by other Officers.

Members also queried whether the Health Improvement Team could continue to function with the deletion of the 0.6fte non-funded vacant post, and the Environmental Health Manager confirmed, that whilst the increased workload would be difficult for the Team to absorb, deletion of that post would be preferable over losing the rest of the non-grant funded posts.

Following discussion of the proposal, Members queried whether all the information associated with this savings option had been reflected in the report and requested further information in regards to the proposal to deleting the non-grant funded Health Improvement Officer posts. Data was requested to demonstrate the impact of the work of the Team on local health issues and challenges (such as smoking cessation rates). The Head of Public Protection explained that the work of the Team incorporated a wide range of approaches and arranged for this information to be provided to Members ahead of the next special MTFP Scrutiny meeting.

The final element of suggested savings in discretionary services related to Civic Catering, with the Head of Public Protection outlining the current catering service provided to staff at Penallta House and Pontllanfraith House. Members were informed that over 26,400 transactions take place on an annual basis, with the service also providing catering for in-house meetings and functions, together with the maintenance of facilities to enable staff to bring in their own food.

The report proposed 4 options for consideration, including the closure of the staff restaurants within Penallta House and Pontllanfraith House, removing the hot lunch provision in Penallta House Staff Restaurant, increasing staff restaurant prices, and the franchising out of Civic Catering. Achievable savings would be between £12,000 and £142,000, with the impact of each of these proposals outlined to Members.

Marcia Lewis, Principal Catering Officer, added that Civic Catering was valued by Council employees and visitors alike, and that the service was held up as an example of high standards within the Authority.

Members discussed the proposed options and queried whether Option 4 (franchise out Civic Catering) would guarantee the retention of the staff. It was confirmed that this would be dependant on the tender specifications but that TUPE arrangements would apply in the event of a like-for-like service. It was explained that the contents of any such franchise agreement would depend on the requirements of the organisation.

It was suggested that an overview of the number of people who used the service and who brought their own lunches to work would be useful, and Members queried if consultation had been undertaken with staff with regards to the service provision. Officers clarified around 28,000 transactions were carried out in 2014 compared to 32,000 in 2013 and that that consultation regarding the Civic Catering service took place with staff on an annual basis via a customer satisfaction survey, with a high rate of satisfaction recorded. It was confirmed that the response rate was very high and Officers arranged to provide this figure to Members.

It was queried whether the MTFP proposal to consider the closure of Pontllanfraith House as a savings efficiency would have an impact on the Civic Catering proposals. Officers confirmed that similar situations with the closure of corporate buildings had been experienced before (such as Hawtin Park) and that a cost element would be involved in the redeployment of staff. It was explained that as the contracted hours and terms of employment of Civic Catering staff differed to that of other catering staff, redeployment of these staff was not as straightforward as redeploying school-based catering staff.

Reference was made to the proposal to increase staff restaurant prices by 5% in 2015/16. There had been a price increase of 5% for 2014/15 and Officers confirmed that so far this year transactions had decreased slightly, but that extenuating factors such as strike action and warm weather had to be taken into account, and that the final figure would be known at the end of the year.

Following detailed discussion of the proposals, Members felt that the Civic Catering service should be retained but requested further information in regards to the 4 options detailed (close staff restaurants, remove hot lunch provision at Penallta House, increase staff restaurant prices, and franchise out the service), including the impact of the MTFP proposal to close Pontllanfraith House. Members also requested information on the overall running costs of the Civic Catering service.

The final set of proposals outlined in the report related to savings options within statutory services, namely additional income from Pest Control, increasing Licensing Fees, increasing Registration Service Fees, and increasing school meal prices. These suggested savings totalled £55,000. The Head of Public Protection presented each of the options in turn which were then discussed in detail by Members.

With regards to pest control, Officers confirmed that additional income opportunities had arisen as a result of contract arrangements and therefore a further additional income of £10,000 was projected.

Discussion took place regarding licensing fees, with Members querying the level of the proposed increase, which would bring about a saving of £8,000. Jacqui Morgan, Trading Standards, Licensing and Registrars Manager, clarified that an exercise had begun at the start of the year assessing the cost to the authority in providing the various types of licences and clarified the difference between locally set fees and those that are set centrally. A detailed report on proposed licence fees for 2015/16 would be submitted to the Licensing Committee and then Council and would include statutory consultation with the taxi trade.

Members noted the additional £10,000 income generated by Pest Control for 2015/16 and unanimously endorsed the proposals to increase Licensing and Registration Service Fees.

The report also proposed an increase in school meal prices for 2015/16, with Officers explaining that a 5% increase had been agreed during the last academic year, which had been introduced from Autumn 2014. It was explained that therefore this would bring about a saving of £27,000 in the financial year 2014/15 and £27,000 in the financial year 2015/16. It was proposed that a further 5% increase be introduced for the academic year 2015/16, which would realise total savings of £54,000 over the financial years 2015/16 and 2016/17.

Officers also clarified the current price of a school meal (£1.85 in primary schools and £2.15 in secondary schools) and the number of free breakfast clubs (69 in the borough).

Members raised concerns regarding the proposed further increase of 5% in school meal prices from Sept 2015, and asked for further information to be provided, including comparative data on the uptake of school meals since the price increase of Sept 2014.

Members noted the additional £27,000 saving for 2015/16 generated by the increase in school meal prices for 2014/15.

The meeting closed at 7.37 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 28th October 2014 they were signed by the Chair.

CHAIR