



REGENERATION AND ENVIRONMENT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD AT PENALLTA HOUSE, YSTRAD MYNACH ON TUESDAY, 16TH 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, R.T. Davies, N. Dix, C. Elsbury, Ms J.G. Jones,
S. Kent, M.J. Prew, Mrs E. Stenner

Cabinet Members:

K. James (Regeneration, Planning and Sustainable Development), D.V. Poole (Community
and Leisure Services)

Together with:

S. Aspinall (Acting Deputy Chief Executive), P. Elliott (Head of Regeneration and Planning),
R. Hartshorn (Head of Public Protection), M.S. Williams (Head of Community and Leisure
Services), R. Kyte (Team Leader Strategic and Development Planning), M. Lloyd (Highway
Operations Group Manager), J. Jones (Democratic Services Manager) and R. Barrett
(Committee Services Officer)

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors R.W. Gough, Mrs P. Leonard, Mrs D.
Price and A. Rees, together with Cabinet Member T.J. Williams (Highways, Transportation
and Engineering).

The Chair congratulated Councillor Mrs D. Price on her recent wedding and Members wished
her health and happiness for the future.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillors Mrs E. Aldworth, J. Bevan, Mrs A. Blackman, D.T. Davies, R.T. Davies,
C. Elsbury, S. Kent, and Mrs E. Stenner declared an interest in Agenda Item 14 as
Community Councillors.

As there were no recommendations being determined on this item, Members were not
required to leave the meeting room and were able to participate fully in the debate.

3. MINUTES – 12TH JUNE 2014

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Special Regeneration and Environment Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 12th June 2014 (minute nos. 1 - 3, on page nos. 1 - 7) be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

4. MINUTES – 1ST JULY 2014

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Regeneration and Environment Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 1st July 2014 (minute nos. 1 - 11, on page nos. 1 - 6) be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

5. MINUTES – 30TH JULY 2014

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Regeneration and Environment Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 30th July 2014 (minute nos. 1 - 3, on page nos. 1 - 9) be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

6. CALL-IN PROCEDURE

There had been no matters referred to the Scrutiny Committee in accordance with the call-in procedure.

7. CABINET REPORTS

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

8. REPORT OF THE CABINET MEMBERS

The Scrutiny Committee received reports from Cabinet Members D.V. Poole and K. James. Councillor Poole also presented a report on behalf of the Cabinet Member for Highways, Transportation and Engineering, Councillor T.J. Williams.

Councillor D.V. Poole, Cabinet Member for Community and Leisure Services, informed Members that waste is now being delivered to Prosiect Gwyrdd which represents an interim arrangement and enables the operator to commission the plant fully. In regards to the waste transfer facility at the Ty Duffryn site, the planning application is being collated for submission at the end of September. Running in parallel with this process will be a community engagement exercise which will be managed jointly by staff from Community and Leisure Services and Corporate Communications.

The Authority has obtained the White Ribbon Campaign's organisational status following application earlier in the summer. The campaign seeks to end men's violence against women by challenging attitudes and behaviour, and Cabinet Members D.V. Poole and Christine Forehead have agreed to act as Domestic Abuse Champions for the Authority. Members were also advised that it is the 10-year anniversary of the Community Safety Warden Service, with a small commemorative event to be held at Penallta House on 18th September 2014. Finally, the Cabinet Member welcomed back Lewis Girls Comprehensive into the in-house catering provision after 12 years absence and as the 3rd Comprehensive School to return to the service in just over 2 years.

Members were pleased to note the Prosiect Gwyrdd arrangements and queried the consultation process for the waste facility at the Ty Dyffryn site. Officers confirmed that a public engagement exercise would take place, including letters to local residents and an exhibition to be displayed in the main Council Offices. Subject to planning permission and successful consultation, it was anticipated that the new facility would open within the next 12 months.

Councillor K. James, Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Planning and Sustainable Development, informed Members of the opening of the Cognation Mountain Bike project at Cwmcarn Forest Drive by the Minister for Economy, Science and Transport on Friday 19th September. The project has seen the development of new changing rooms and retail unit, a new 'pump track', downhill course and new 15km cross country trail.

With regards to local events in 2014, the Caerphilly 10K event saw a 30% increase in participation compared to 2013. and the Big Cheese attracted over 50,000 visitors, with a number of retailers staging their own events to take advantage of the footfall. Park and Rise usage and town centre footfall for the Big Cheese also increased on previous years, with visitors from as far away as Belgium. Plans are now underway for a programme of Christmas Events across the Authority.

The Cabinet Member advised the Committee that STEAM (Scarborough Tourism Economic Activity Monitor) figures for 2013 show that the value and volume of tourism to the county borough increased by around 3% over 2012 with tourism expenditure in the county borough now exceeding £100m. Car parking charges in country parks have recently been introduced, successfully raising over £5000 in under four weeks as part of the Authority's Medium Term Financial Plan strategy. The Local Development Strategy for the Rural Development Plan, which identifies themes for the next 7 years, is progressing well and will be submitted by 30th September. Bids will also be submitted by this date towards the current grants programme from Natural Resources Wales.

The Cabinet Member responded to queries and confirmed that following a slight initial decrease following the introduction of parking charges, visitor numbers were now higher than before. Officers clarified the enforcement procedures, with it confirmed that the total income raised from the new charges would become apparent within the next calendar year. The future of the Big Cheese event was queried and it was explained that proposals relating to this would be presented at the next special Regeneration and Environment Scrutiny Committee meeting on 1st October 2014. The impact of tree-felling plans at Cwmcarn Forest Drive was also queried and it was explained that it was only the forest drive road itself that would be closed, with all other facilities remaining open for business.

The report from Cabinet Member T.J. Williams advised Members that Officers are working on the Council's statutory Local Transport Plan (LTP) which will set out the local transport schemes and priorities necessary over the next 5 years from April 2015. A draft plan will be issued for public and statutory consultation over the next few weeks, and will be submitted to the Welsh Government by January 2015 following Members' approval.

The Authority's Winter Maintenance Plan has been circulated and all Members were reminded that the MTFP will present significant challenges that could impact on the winter maintenance service delivery. It was advised that the Authority is fully stocked with over 10,000 tonnes of salt, which should be sufficient for an average winter. Anti-slip surfaces have also been replaced on five footbridges and have been well-received by users.

REPORTS OF OFFICERS

Consideration was given to the following reports.

9. MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL PLAN – MAINTENANCE OF COMMUNITY SCHEMES FUNDING

Rob Hartshorn, Head of Public Protection, presented the report, which sought Members' comments on a range of savings options relating to the Maintenance of Community Schemes budgets. These savings options were provided as part of the wider Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) contributions in accordance with the Cabinet report of 16th April 2014 ("Next Stages of the MTFP – 2015/16 & 2016/17").

The Community Schemes Budget, currently comprising of ten individual schemes, provides funding for a wide variety of initiatives within communities, including maintenance and repair work, planting projects and playgrounds. The report presented Members with two options for consideration – deletion of the full Community Schemes Budget of £252,000, or reduction of the budget via some of the individual schemes. Full details of these options and the implications for each were appended to the report.

Following consideration of the report, Members were unable to support the deletion of the complete Community Schemes Budget and duly considered each of the individual schemes in turn.

Members considered the proposal to delete the Community Response Team, who are responsible for tidying areas, painting and minor repairs, with the majority of their work within the town centres. Deletion of this scheme would bring about a saving of £100,000. Members raised concerns that removal of the scheme could impact on the appearance of town centres and queried whether these duties could be absorbed by other departments. Officers confirmed that whilst this was feasible, other maintenance tasks such as road repairs would have to take priority in the interests of health and safety.

Following discussion of this proposal, Members felt that the total budget for the Community Response Team should be retained and requested that consultation on the impact of this proposal be carried out with town and community councils

The next proposal considered was to cease contribution to Urban Renewal for town centre improvement works, which is used to carry out work items identified on the regular environmental audits as part of the Town Centre Improvement Group, and also assists in match funding small to medium improvement projects in the town centre. This proposal would bring about a saving of £20,000. Members raised concerns regarding the impact that deletion of the scheme could have on town centres and their management groups and were subsequently unable to support this option.

The proposal to cease funding to Community Partnerships was considered, which would bring about a saving of £20,000. This budget has traditionally been used to deliver small schemes identified by Community Partnerships and has also been utilised as match funding for externally funded activities such as play parks and skateboard parks. Following consideration of this proposal, Members requested further information regarding the maintenance of existing projects, together with plans for future projects and community partnerships.

The next proposal related to the deletion of the Litter Bins budget, which is utilised by Economic Development to improve/enhance town centre bin provision or replace bins. If there is no pressing need in this area it is used to satisfy requests for replacement or additional bins. Deletion of this budget would result in a saving of £7,000. Members raised concerns regarding the impact of this proposal on town centres and felt that the budget should be retained, requesting consultation on this matter with town and community councils.

Members considered the proposal to delete the contribution to the Invasive Plant Species Officer post within the Authority, which would bring about a saving of £15,000. Members felt that the contribution towards this specialist post should be retained and were unable to support this option.

The Parks Allocation to Cemeteries and Parks budget was considered, which is used to maintain a number of areas over and above the core maintenance budget, such as renewal of fencing, replacement of footpaths and installation of drainage. In this regard a list of examples of schemes that have been funded as a result of this allocation was included in the report. Deletion of this budget would bring about a saving of £40,000. Members discussed the proposal and felt that this funding should be retained.

Members considered the contribution to the Living Environment Partnership, Local Environmental Quality Small Grants Fund. 8 projects were supported from this fund in 2014/15, with their aims to enhance the local environment within the county borough. This proposal would bring about a saving of £10,000. Members felt that this scheme should be retained.

The contribution to the Probation Service for Community Payback was considered, which would bring about a saving of £10,000 if deleted. Members were advised that if the arrangement was withdrawn that there would be no graffiti removal service and that the responsibility for such removal would fall back to building owners. The graffiti removal vehicle purchased in 2012 would also be sold. Members discussed the effects of withdrawing the service and felt that it was important that this scheme be retained.

Members considered the Allotment Strategy Implementation which would bring about a saving of £5,000 if deleted. The scheme is used as a method of absorbing the increasing public demand on allotment provision and Members supported the retention of this scheme.

The last scheme for consideration was the maintenance budget for Community Schemes, which is used to cover essential inspection, general maintenance and small scale replacement of playground and associated equipment in areas originally funded by external bodies to local community groups and partnership teams. Deletion of this allocation would save £10,000. Members raised concerns in regards to the health and safety implications if this funding was withdrawn, together with the impact of possible closure of these schemes, and felt that this funding should be retained.

10. CAERPHILLY COUNTY BOROUGH LOCAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN (FIRST REVIEW) UP TO 2031: POPULATION AND GROWTH OPTIONS

Rhian Kyte, Team Leader Strategic and Development Planning, presented the report, which sought the views of Members on the proposed level of population and household growth to be included in the Preferred Strategy, to underpin the first review of the Caerphilly County Borough Local Development Plan up to 2031, prior to its presentation to Cabinet and thereafter Council.

The report detailed key assumptions that determine the future level of population and housing growth to be accommodated in the county borough, in particular the level of births, deaths and net migration. Members were informed of the stakeholder engagement undertaken to date for the review of the LDP and how this work has influenced the population and household growth scenarios presented for consideration in this report.

The Committee's views were sought on the use of population and household growth scenario M as a basis for the preparation of the Preferred Strategy, which will be considered by Council in early 2015. Members considered the Population and Household Growth Scenarios detailed within the report and discussed with Officers the impact of the potential release of greenfield sites, which was detailed in the stakeholder engagement responses to Scenario M.

A number of queries were raised by Members, particularly in relation to section 4.33 of the report, which detailed the land use implications of Scenario M and recommended an annual house-building rate of 600 dwellings per annum, equating to 12,000 new dwellings over the plan period.

Members queried the number of builds that would be allocated to social housing and Officers confirmed that this was dependant on a number of factors, including the locality of these builds. Following Members' comments, it was confirmed by Officers that locality of transportation links were also a key part of the Preferred Strategy.

Concerns were raised regarding the assessment criteria that would be used to determine the land allocation for housing builds and Officers confirmed that all existing land allocations would be revisited to ensure they were still appropriate to the Caerphilly County Borough Local Development Plan. Members referenced section 4.34 of the report which named a number of locations within the Authority and it was confirmed by Officers that these were provided as examples in order to visualise the size of the 231 hectares detailed in Scenario M of the Preferred Growth Option. Members were invited to contact Rhian Kyte or a member of her team if they had any future queries or comments in relation to the Plan.

It was moved and seconded that the recommendations in the report be forwarded to Cabinet and thereafter Council for approval. By a show of hands, this was unanimously agreed.

RECOMMENDED to Cabinet that:-

- (i) Population and Household Growth Scenarios A, B, E, H and M be subject to further consideration by stakeholders as part of the pre-deposit public consultation stage of the review process;
- (ii) Population and Household Growth Scenario M be used as the Preferred Growth Option and as a basis to underpin the Preferred Strategy for the Caerphilly County Borough Local Development Plan (First Review) up to 2031.

11. LOCAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN – ANNUAL MONITORING REPORT 2014

The report outlined the contents of the Caerphilly County Borough Local Development Plan 2014 Annual Monitoring Report (AMR) for Members' consideration, prior to its referral to Cabinet and thereafter Council. Members were advised of the conclusions of the 2014 Annual Monitoring Report, with the 2014 AMR recommendations as follows:-

- R1 The 2014 Annual Monitoring Plan has indicated that substantial progress has been made in implementing the Caerphilly County Borough Local Development Plan up to 2021 and that the Development Strategy is being effective.
- R2 That limited greenfield release be considered on sites that are acceptable in planning terms in order to address the lack of a five year land supply in the short term.
- R3 That the First Review of the Caerphilly County Borough Local Development Plan continue to be progressed in line with the Welsh Government and Council Agreed Delivery Agreement (13th February 2014).

Members raised concerns with regard to Recommendation 2 of the Annual Monitoring Report, particularly in view of the impact this could have on the release of greenfield sites within the Authority. Officers confirmed that any such potential releases would be determined on their individual merit following a detailed assessment of the sites against the Caerphilly County Borough Local Development Plan and taking into account all other planning and material considerations.

Members considered and noted the findings of the 2014 Annual Monitoring Report and the implications of the recommendations detailed therein. It was moved and seconded that the recommendations in the report be forwarded to Cabinet and thereafter Council for approval. By a show of hands, this was unanimously agreed.

RECOMMENDED that:-

- (i) The 2014 Annual Monitoring Report be referred to Cabinet for consideration;
- (ii) The 2014 Annual Monitoring Report be submitted to the Welsh Government before the deadline of 31st October 2014.

12. REQUESTS FOR REPORTS TO BE INCLUDED ON THE NEXT AVAILABLE AGENDA

1. Councillor C. Cuss requested a report on the advantages/disadvantages of setting up a trust to manage Leisure Centres.

13. INFORMATION ITEMS

The Committee noted the following items for information, full details of which were included within the Officers reports. There were no items brought forward for review.

- (1) Various Waste Management Issues.
- (2) Bryn Compost Liaison Group Minutes – 3rd June 2014.
- (3) Grants to the Voluntary Sector Panel Minutes – 16th July 2014.
- (4) Voluntary Sector Sub-Committee Minutes – 18th June 2014.
- (5) Bargoed Town Centre Management Group Minutes – 21st May 2014.
- (6) Blackwood Town Centre Management Group Minutes – 16th May 2014.
- (7) Caerphilly Town Centre Management Group Minutes – 3rd June 2014.
- (8) Risca Town Centre Management Group Minutes – 24th June 2014.
- (9) Ystrad Mynach Town Centre Management Group Minutes – 15th July 2014.
- (10) Summary of Members' Attendance – Quarter 1 – 8th May 2014 to 30th June 2014.
- (11) Regeneration and Environment Scrutiny Committee Forward Work Programme.

The meeting closed at 8.16 pm

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