



## **ENVIRONMENT AND SUSTAINABILITY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS ON TUESDAY, 14TH  
SEPTEMBER 2021 AT 5.30 P.M.**

PRESENT:

Councillors:

M.A. Adams, A. Collis, D.T. Davies (part of meeting), C. Elsbury, M. Evans, S. Kent,  
A. Leonard, B. Owen, D.W.R. Preece, J.E. Roberts and T.J. Williams

Cabinet Members:

N. George (Waste, Public Protection & Street Scene), J. Pritchard (Infrastructure and Property), E. Stenner (Performance, Economy & Enterprise), A. Whitcombe (Sustainability, Planning & Fleet), R. Whiting (Learning & Leisure)

Together with:

M.S. Williams (Corporate Director – Economy and Environment), R. Hartshorn (Head of Public Protection, Community & Leisure Services), M. Lloyd (Head of Infrastructure), J. Lougher (Sport & Leisure Development Manager), J. Reynolds (Sports & Leisure Facilities Manager), I. Raymond (Business Improvement Officer), M. Jacques (Scrutiny Officer), R. Barrett (Committee Services Officer), J. Lloyd (Committee Services Officer)

Also present:

Cllr K. Etheridge (Blackwood Ward), Cllr A. Farina-Childs (Blackwood Ward)

### **RECORDING AND VOTING ARRANGEMENTS**

The Scrutiny Officer reminded those present that the meeting was being filmed and would be available following the meeting via the Council's website – [Click Here to View](#). Members were advised that voting on decisions would take place via Microsoft Forms.

### **ELECTION OF ACTING CHAIR**

Due to the unavailability of the Chair and Vice Chair, it was moved and seconded that Councillor M. Adams be elected as Acting Chair for the duration of the meeting. By way of roll call (and in noting there were 9 for, 0 against and 0 abstentions), this was unanimously agreed.

RESOLVED that Councillor M. Adams be elected as Acting Chair for the duration of the meeting.

**1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors A. Gair, J. Gale, A. Hussey (Vice Chair), J. Scriven and J. Simmonds.

**2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

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

**3. MINUTES – 22ND JUNE 2021**

It was moved and seconded that the minutes of the meeting held on 22<sup>nd</sup> June 2021 be approved as a correct record and by way of Microsoft Forms and verbal confirmation (and in noting there were 9 for, 0 against and 1 abstentions) this was agreed by the majority present.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Environment and Sustainability Scrutiny Committee held on 22<sup>nd</sup> June 2021 (minute nos. 1 – 9) be approved as a correct record.

Councillor S. Kent confirmed that he had abstained from voting on the minutes as he had not been present at the last meeting.

**4. CALL-IN PROCEDURE**

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

**5. ENVIRONMENT AND SUSTAINABILITY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME**

Mark Jacques (Scrutiny Officer presented the report, which outlined details of the Environment and Sustainability Scrutiny Committee Forward Work Programme (FWP) for the period September 2021 to March 2022.

The Committee noted the details of the reports scheduled for forthcoming meetings and a Member asked if an update report on update on temporary road closures around four schools in the county borough could be brought to the Committee. It was agreed that this be scheduled for the Scrutiny Committee meeting on 7<sup>th</sup> December 2021.

It was moved and seconded that subject to the inclusion of the aforementioned report in the FWP, the report recommendation be approved. By way of Microsoft Forms (and in noting there were 10 for, 0 against and 0 abstentions) this was unanimously agreed.

RESOLVED that subject to an additional report being scheduled for 7<sup>th</sup> December 2021 (an update on temporary road closures around four schools in the county borough) it was RESOLVED that the Forward Work Programme as appended to the meeting papers be published on the Council's website.

## **6. CABINET REPORTS**

It was confirmed that there had been no requests for any of the Cabinet reports listed on the agenda to be brought forward for discussion at the meeting.

## **7. NOTICE OF MOTION - REAL NAPPIES INCENTIVE SCHEME.**

Councillor A. Farina-Childs presented his Notice of Motion which asked Caerphilly County Borough Council to implement a voucher system to encourage families to switch from disposable nappies to re-useable nappies.

Councillor Farina-Childs summarised the reasons for his Notice of Motion and advised that he had brought this forward after being approached by a resident. The Notice of Motion made reference to other local authorities that have already adopted the scheme, and also outlined the significant environmental and landfill impact of single use nappies as they do not readily degrade. Councillor Farina-Childs explained that this scheme could provide significant savings for families and produce carbon reduction across the county borough.

The Committee discussed the Notice of Motion and individual Members expressed their support for the implementation of the scheme but felt that it should also be supported by a communication/social media promotion campaign.

Officers confirmed that whilst nappies in landfill do not degrade, Caerphilly waste is incinerated, so the landfill impact of nappies is not an issue for this Authority. Members were advised that other authorities who run the scheme have been contacted, and they had confirmed that take up numbers had been very low, with scheme administration costs being relatively high when considering take up within schemes. Members were asked to note that should the scheme go forward, then a budget allocation would need to be established.

A Member sought clarification as to how the scheme would be administered and the Officers confirmed that it would likely to be operated on demand by the Caerphilly Cares Service. It was noted that a separate report would be required to Cabinet to outline the aspects and costs of the proposed scheme.

Members felt the proposal was an excellent idea but should also be considered in the longer term by investigating the possible involvement of partner organisations such as the local health board who could participate in raising awareness with parents and potentially sharing costs. Members also felt that having declared a climate emergency, the Council should be actively encouraging the re-use option wherever possible.

Having fully considered the Notice of Motion, the Scrutiny Committee took a vote to support the Motion's recommendation to Council. By way of Microsoft Forms and verbal confirmation (and in noting there were 9 for, 1 against and 1 abstention) this was agreed by the majority present. It was therefore

RECOMMENDED to Council that the Notice of Motion be supported.

## **8. NOTICE OF MOTION - ABOLITION OF CAR PARKING CHARGES IN TOWN CENTRE CAR PARKS**

Councillor K. Etheridge presented his Notice of Motion which called on the Council to abolish charges within the Town Centre Car Parks in order to help traders and businesses within our Towns when a review is conducted in September.

Councillor Etheridge summarised the reasons for his Notice of Motion and advised that a petition of 440 signatures would also be presented to Council on this matter. He thanked Cabinet for extending the suspension of charges for 12 months, but to remove uncertainty for retailers asked the Scrutiny Committee to support the motion and abolish car parking charges permanently, and he emphasised the importance of supporting town centre business and traders.

Members expressed concern that abolishing car parking charges would not assist in the rotation and flow of traffic in town centres, particularly for smaller car parks such as The Twyn in Caerphilly, and they would prefer to see a limited free parking allocation (for example 2-3 hours). Currently this car park is full by 9am due to staff usage from the various business in that area, and this in turn disperses shoppers' cars into side streets or loading bays, causing congestion. It was felt that car parking issues needed to be looked at in a much wider context and Members welcomed the involvement of a Task and Finish Group, but that this needed to be fast tracked if its recommendations were to make an impact on Town Centre recovery. The Member suggested that a traffic flow survey might give a true representation of use.

Officers confirmed that Cabinet were acutely aware of the issues and that these issues were exacerbated at the Twyn car park due to its size and explained the implications in terms of traffic regulations orders and the time this would take. It was however confirmed that a further report on this specific issue was due to be considered by Cabinet. An Officer also explained that although a traffic count is easy to set up, it would be very resource intensive as it required a manual count by staff to note registration and identify length of stay etc. Members asked whether volunteers could be used for this and the Officer explained that this was a possibility but explained that they would require training, and this would also take time.

A Member applauded the extension to September 2022 but expressed concern for smaller town centres and smaller car parks, as so much of the COVID recovery process was still unknown. He emphasised the impact that any reduction in footfall would have on a town centre like Risca, which had the smallest footfall of the town centres and felt that any proposed solutions must be looked at in the longer term.

Reference was made to the income generated by car parks and Officers confirmed that was estimated to be between £630k-£700k and the service costs between £550k-£600k, providing approximately £100k surplus, which is invested into other highways services. Without it, the infrastructure division would either need to make £700k of savings or the Authority would need to introduce a budget to replace the lost income.

Members sought clarification as to Park and Ride charging and the Officer confirmed that there was currently no charge in Park and Ride car parks as part of a drive to promote and increase the use of public transport while avoiding users seeking to park in residential side streets. During the course of the debate, a query was also received on free bus services to shopping centres (such as the Asda Blackwood bus) and Officers confirmed that these services had been withdrawn as they were subsidised by supermarkets and not the Authority.

Having fully considered the Notice of Motion, the Scrutiny Committee took a vote on the motion and by way of Microsoft Forms (and in noting there were 3 for, 6 against and 2 abstentions) the motion was declared lost. It was therefore

**RECOMMENDED** to Council that the Notice of Motion not be supported.

## **REPORTS OF OFFICERS**

Consideration was given to the following reports.

### **9. DIRECTORATE PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT - COMMUNITIES YEAR END REPORT 2020/21**

The Cabinet Member for Sustainability, Planning & Fleet introduced the report, which outlined the Economy & Environment Directorate Performance Assessment (DPA) and which is part of the Council's Annual Performance Framework. The DPA provides information and analysis for the 2020/21 financial year and was attached at Appendix 1. The DPA forms part of the overall Council 'self-assessment' activity, and the Scrutiny Committee were invited to discuss, challenge and scrutinise the information in the DPA.

Mark S. Williams (Corporate Director – Economy and Environment) presented the report, which asked Members to scrutinise the Directorate elements applicable to Community and Leisure Services, Infrastructure, and Public Protection. It was noted that the performance elements applicable to Regeneration and Planning had been scrutinised by the Housing and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee at their meeting the previous week.

Mr Williams highlighted the extensive realm of information contained in the document and acknowledged that 2020 had been a year like no other due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Mr Williams placed on record his thanks to all staff who had kept front-line services running through this particularly challenging time, and also emphasised that although the Authority had needed to temporarily shut down some services due to WG guidance at the time, the Authority had continued to keep all its key services running when many other local authorities had taken a different approach.

Particular reference was made to the work of the Sports and Leisure Team, many of whom had been redeployed during the pandemic and willingly carried out tasks such as Free School Meal delivery and working for the Council's Track and Trace Scheme. Mr Williams also highlighted the work of Environmental Health at the forefront of the pandemic, together with the efforts of Trading Standards in relation to Covid enforcement. He emphasised the fantastic efforts of staff and acknowledged there were some areas where performance was skewed during this exceptionally strange year.

The Scrutiny Committee discussed the report and congratulated the Directorate on how well they had performed during the pandemic in these exceptionally challenging times. The Committee placed on record their praise for staff and asked Mr Williams to relay their thanks to staff across the Directorate.

Following consideration of the report, and having discussed, challenged and scrutinised the information in the Directorate Performance Assessment, the Committee noted its contents.

### **10. SPORT AND ACTIVE RECREATION STRATEGY - PROGRESS UPDATE**

The Cabinet Member for Learning & Leisure presented the report, which provided an update on the progress made in delivering the Council's Sport and Active Recreation Strategy 2019–2029 and asked the Scrutiny Committee to acknowledge the progress made to date and agree any suitable update reports required.

Members were reminded that the Strategy was implemented in January 2019, which sets out an ambitious and holistic vision for the delivery of sport and active recreation across the county borough aimed at improving the health and wellbeing of communities. Considerable progress has been made in delivering against the ambitions set out in the SARS, despite the unprecedented and extensive challenges linked to the Covid-19 pandemic. The pandemic has not prevented the Council from delivering on this Strategy, and the Cabinet Member placed on record his thanks to the Sports and Leisure Team for their phenomenal work during these difficult circumstances.

Members were referred to Section 5.7 of the report which set out details of the collaborative initiatives that have been developed and established, including the new Athletics Track in Oakdale and the enhancement of several multi use 3G pitches at school sites across the borough. Members were also referred to Section 5.19 of the report which set out details of the range of programmes, developments and investments that are also scheduled for either commencement or completion across the next 6 – 12 months, and which will further increase opportunities for residents to engage in sport and active recreation.

It was emphasised to Members that the Strategy is not just about the Council's sports facilities but promotes a broader participation and engagement in sport and opportunities for physical activity, as well as a broader contribution to wellbeing, which encompasses the Council's parks, countryside and other green infrastructure, together with the work being carried out with other partners.

Jeff Reynolds (Sports & Leisure Facilities Manager) and Jared Lougher (Sport & Leisure Development Manager) were invited to provide further detail of the range of projects being delivered across their respective areas.

Mr Reynolds referenced the exceptional circumstances that the Council have been operating in for the majority of the time since the Strategy was adopted and placed on record his thanks to the Sports and Leisure Team for their remarkable work, flexibility, willingness and availability during the pandemic. In terms of the report, Mr Reynolds highlighted the significant progress that has been made and the projects that have been developed since the Strategy has been in place, which places Caerphilly in a league of their own across Wales in terms of high-quality facility provision. Reference was also made to the partnership agreements which has allowed some projects to come to fruition. Members were asked to note that a broad range of sport and leisure activities have continued to be offered despite the restrictions arising from the pandemic, with many of these delivered through alternative avenues such as social media.

Mr Lougher also paid tribute to the work of his staff in very challenging times and referenced the messages of thanks from local residents for the support given to them by redeployed staff during the pandemic. In relation to the Strategy, Members were referred to the enhancements of facilities as a result of collaboration with partners such as the WRU, Hockey Wales and Sports Wales, which have brought in over £1.2m of external funding. Mr Lougher expressed the importance of this continued collaboration and also referred to the increase in active lifestyles as a result of the pandemic, which saw more residents making use of the countryside and green spaces across the county borough.

During the course of the ensuing discussion, one Member highlighted a situation in his ward where residents were still not allowed to hire an indoors sports hall to resume 5-a-side football. Mr Reynolds explained that 5-a-side football for non-affiliated clubs had only recently resumed on 6<sup>th</sup> September 2021 following the lifting of Covid restrictions. The Member confirmed that the booking enquiry had been made some weeks back before restrictions were lifted and he would relay this latest information back to the local residents.

A query was received around ensuring that the booking and playing of 5-a-side football is Covid-safe. Mr Reynolds explained that the Council are operating within the guidance from the Football Association of Wales, and so the requirements for indoor 5-a-side football include good ventilation, the wearing of facemasks and use of hand sanitizer, a specific risk assessment for each group, restrictions on numbers and regular breaks every 15 minutes and shorter bookings to allow clean-down periods in-between games, together with a designated Covid Officer for each team to complete procedures such as Track and Trace forms.

Following consideration of the report, it was moved and seconded that the following recommendations be approved. By way of Microsoft Forms (and in noting there were 8 for, 0 against and 0 abstentions) this was unanimously agreed.

RESOLVED that:-

- (i) the progress made to date in delivering the Sport & Active Recreation Strategy be acknowledged;
- (ii) it be arranged for Officers to prepare suitable update report(s) to the Scrutiny Committee in accordance with its Forward Work Programme.

The meeting closed at 6.57 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 26th October 2021.

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CHAIR