



ENVIRONMENT AND SUSTAINABILITY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS ON TUESDAY, 8TH FEBRUARY 2022 AT 5.30 P.M.

PRESENT:

Councillor D.T. Davies (Chair)
Councillor A. Hussey (Vice-Chair)

Councillors:

M.A. Adams, A. Collis, C. Elsbury, A. Gair, S. Kent, A. Leonard, B. Owen, D.W.R. Preece

Cabinet Members:

Councillors N. George (Waste, Public Protection and Street Scene), J. Pritchard (Infrastructure and Property), A. Whitcombe (Sustainability, Planning and Fleet)

Together with:

M.S. Williams (Corporate Director – Economy and Environment), M. Lloyd (Head of Infrastructure), R. Hartshorn (Head of Public Protection, Community and Leisure Services), D. Roberts (Principal Group Accountant), C. Forbes-Thompson (Scrutiny Manager), R. Barrett (Committee Services Officer), M. Harris (Committee Services Support Officer)

RECORDING AND VOTING ARRANGEMENTS

The Chair 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.

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors M. Evans, J.E. Roberts, J. Scriven, J. Simmonds, Mrs J. Stone and T.J. Williams.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor S. Kent declared a personal interest in Agenda Item No. 8 (Review of Experimental Pedestrian and Cycle Zones outside schools) as a school governor and parent and as he had been involved in discussions in connection to the review, and remained in the meeting during consideration of the item.

3. MINUTES – 7TH DECEMBER 2021

It was moved and seconded that the minutes of the meeting held on 7th December 2021 be approved as a correct record and by way of Microsoft Forms (and in noting there were 7 for, 0 against and 2 abstentions) this was agreed by the majority present.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Environment and Sustainability Scrutiny Committee held on 7th December 2021 (minute nos. 1 – 8) be approved as a correct record.

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

C. Forbes-Thompson (Scrutiny Manager) presented the report, which outlined details of the Environment and Sustainability Scrutiny Committee Forward Work Programme (FWP) for the period February 2022 to March 2022.

Members were asked to consider the FWP alongside the Cabinet work programme and suggest any changes prior to publication on the Council's website. The Scrutiny Committee noted the details of reports scheduled for the forthcoming meeting on 22nd March 2022.

It was moved and seconded that 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 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 - CROSSING PATROLS POLICY

Councillor K. Etheridge introduced his Notice of Motion which requested a review of the School Crossing Patrols process undertaken by CCBC when a crossing patrol vacancy arises after the existing post holder has left or has retired.

Councillor Etheridge explained that this was a strategic motion, with a separate petition being prepared on the withdrawal of the school crossing patrol at Blackwood Primary School, and referred to the Policy for establishing school crossing patrol sites that was originally considered by the Education for Life Scrutiny Committee in 2014. He appreciated that the Policy was based upon national guidance and that this sets out a criteria for evaluation of a school crossing when an attendant leaves the post.

Councillor Etheridge stated that he felt that the evaluation should also include consultation with parents. He outlined that the evaluation by Officers looks at the children entering the school through the main entrance and does not include side entrances, which are often used by nursery school children and breakfast clubs. The Scrutiny Committee were informed that the recent evaluation was carried out during the pandemic, and schools have used side entrances for social distancing. In addition, there is no appeals procedure for schools regarding the evaluation. Members were asked to consider supporting a review of the policy criteria, as the aim is to protect the safety of children.

The Scrutiny Committee were advised that the policy is based on national guidelines and to differ from that would require a bespoke policy. The Council would have to consider what it required from such a policy, in the event that the motion was supported by Councillors. The current National Guidance is tried and tested and applied throughout the UK. Officers explained that although the policy was approved in 2014 the National Guidance was updated in 2016 following a national review. Therefore, the policy can change and will continue to do so when the guidance is updated.

Members were advised that the criteria for the evaluation focuses on the main crossing point and also takes into account other entrances if the main crossing point is used. The crossing point is assessed alongside the number of vehicles, speed, width of the road and walkways, as well as any data on road casualties. Importantly, if there is a change in factors, a reassessment can take place and a crossing attendant can be re-introduced if the revised assessment score justifies it. The Scrutiny Committee were also advised that a new assessment will be carried out at Blackwood Primary School once the Covid-19 restrictions have been lifted.

Reference was made to the new requirements in the Highway Code, which puts pedestrian safety at the forefront. Members asked if this would result in changes to the national guidance. Officers stated that they were not aware of any changes but would check for Members. However, Members were advised that the new 20mph zones guidance from Welsh Government, which is due to be implemented in 2023, will provide additional safety in all residential areas.

Members highlighted that there are efforts to encourage reduced car use and promote walking to school, which may lead to an increase in the number of pedestrians around schools

Following discussion, it was moved and seconded that the Notice of Motion not be supported, and by way of Microsoft Forms (and in noting there were 6 for, 3 against and 1 abstention) this was agreed by the majority present. It was therefore

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

REPORTS OF OFFICERS

Consideration was given to the following reports.

8. REVIEW OF EXPERIMENTAL PEDESTRIAN AND CYCLE ZONES OUTSIDE SCHOOLS (SCHOOL STREETS)

The Cabinet Member for Infrastructure and Property introduced the report, which updated the Scrutiny Committee on the effectiveness and outcomes of the experimental pedestrian and cycle zone traffic regulation orders implemented outside three primary schools, and to

seek their views on whether similar schemes should be considered for other sites within the County Borough.

Members were advised that the Covid-19 pandemic brought about unprecedented changes that has affected all aspects of transport, with large reductions/changes in motorised traffic on all parts of the road network, reduced bus and train use, and high levels of home working. The Council wishes to sustain this modal shift to active travel modes and reduction in car use to support public health and promote environmental benefits. To support these changes, in 2020 Welsh Government released Local Sustainable Transport Response Funding to local authorities to implement 'pop-up' measures / low-cost solutions to reallocate road space in favour of sustainable forms of transport.

A proportion of this funding was allocated to the Council to support schemes at four selected primary schools within the borough, namely Libanus Primary School, Risca Primary School, Twyn Primary School and Aberbargoed Primary School (although Aberbargoed Primary did not proceed with the scheme due to operational changes arising from the pandemic) and the experimental orders for the remaining three schools came into effect on 1st September 2020

Members were advised that the experimental schemes appear to have been generally well received within their respective communities and most of the survey respondents felt that the schemes provide some overall benefits and that they should remain in place. Details of the scheme locations, survey responses and feedback were appended to the report. In view of the positive reception, it was recommended that the experimental schemes should be made permanent. However, Gwent Police have highlighted enforcement difficulties regarding the schemes due to lack of resources, and the Council is also unable to undertake the enforcement activity themselves. Therefore, it has been recommended that no new or additional School Street schemes be implemented due to the additional pressure that this would put on Gwent Police's resources as well as the potential criticism that the council could endure from the lack of enforcement. However, the Cabinet Member added that he would welcome discussions with Gwent Police, local councillors and school governors around what the Council can collectively do to promote these schemes.

It was noted that initial consultation with local ward members and the previous Cabinet Member took place in June 2020 where no objections were received. In July 2020, statutory consultation took place with the emergency services and statutory bodies, community and town councils and affected schools, and again, no objections were received. The report also outlined responses from local members following the introduction of the scheme, where several points on design and enforcement issues were raised. In December 2021, a summary of comments received from Public Notice and open online questionnaires were sent to local members for the Blackwood, St Martins and Risca West Wards and to the Cabinet Member for Infrastructure and Property. The report outlined two comments from local members in response to the summary send out in December 2020 and no local member has asked for any of the proposals to be withdrawn.

Members were reminded that the benefits for the local environment and safer access to schools has been a key driver in this policy. In addition, in June 2019 the Council declared a climate emergency and so it is important that the Council does everything that they possibly can to reduce carbon emissions across the county borough.

Members were therefore asked to offer their views on the experimental schemes, ahead of the report and its recommendations being presented to Cabinet for consideration.

The Scrutiny Committee discussed the report and individual Members expressed their support for the schemes and thanked Officers for the detailed report. However, Members also expressed some reservations and concerns around the enforcement of the schemes,

particularly given the lack of available police resources. One Member cited a recent example in his ward relating to one of the school sites involved in the scheme, where a child had nearly been knocked over by a reversing vehicle on double yellow lines, and he also referred to increased parking confrontations between parents. Particular reference was made to the lack of enforcement powers by the Council and the fact that only the police have powers to stop a moving vehicle. Another Member expressed concerns around pupil safety in his ward as the result of increased parking on double yellow lines. One Member asked if CCTV cameras could be installed at the scheme locations in order to enhance enforcement and apply retrospective fines in cases where the scheme is contravened in order to act as a deterrent.

Mr Marcus Lloyd (Head of Infrastructure) acknowledged the improvements that had been made to parking/traffic movement at these locations since the schemes were implemented but emphasised that the Council do not have the power to enforce unauthorised travel in relation to these schemes. He confirmed that he would undertake research into the use of CCTV cameras, and in response to further queries from Members, also confirmed that opportunities could be explored with Welsh Government around the transfer of enforcement powers from the police to the Council.

A Member also asked if ANPR technology could be used as a means of enforcing the schemes, and enquired around the associated costs. Mr Lloyd confirmed that he could look into this matter as he was aware that it is already being considered by an adjacent Council as a means of tackling anti-social behaviour in one housing estate within the county borough. It was confirmed that offences regarding moving traffic are under the jurisdiction of the police and so this was another area where the transfer of powers to the Council would have to be explored with Welsh Government.

The Cabinet Member also emphasised that he would be more than happy to meet with any of the local councillors or school governors in relation to the three schools enrolled in the schemes in order to address any issues that may arise.

Following consideration of the report and having offered their view on the Officer recommendations as set out in Sections 3.2 and 3.3 of the report, it was moved and seconded that the following recommendations be forwarded to Cabinet for approval. By way of Microsoft Forms (and in noting there were 9 for, 0 against and 0 abstentions) this was unanimously agreed.

RECOMMENDED to Cabinet that:-

- (i) The experimental traffic regulations orders (pedestrian and cycle zones, and one way traffic) at the three primary schools should be made permanent;
- (ii) No new/additional pedestrian and cycle zones should be considered for other school sites within the borough as part of a future programmes of works at this point in time.

9. ECONOMY AND ENVIRONMENT 2021/22 BUDGET MONITORING REPORT (PERIOD 7)

The Cabinet Member for Sustainability, Planning and Fleet introduced the report, which informed Members of projected revenue expenditure for the Economy and Environment Directorate for the 2021/22 financial year. The report summarised the most recent budget monitoring projections for 2021/2022 based on the latest available financial information and more detailed budget monitoring figures for each of the Service Areas within the Economy and Environment Directorate were set out in the report appendices.

Members were requested to note the contents of the report and the detailed budget monitoring pages in respect of the Infrastructure, Public Protection and Community and Leisure Service Divisions which fall under the remit of the Environment and Sustainability Scrutiny Committee.

The Scrutiny Committee considered the report and in referring to a £13k overspend on Bulky Waste, a Member asked if this was due to collection of fly-tipping or people not paying for this service. Mr Dave Roberts (Principal Group Accountant) confirmed that he would make some enquiries and circulate this information to all Members following the meeting.

Following consideration of the report, the Scrutiny Committee noted the contents of the report and the detailed budget monitoring pages in respect of the Infrastructure Services Division, Public Protection Division, and Community and Leisure Services Division.

10. DIRECTORATE PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT FOR ECONOMY AND ENVIRONMENT SERVICES - SIX MONTH UPDATE 2021/22

The Cabinet Member for Sustainability, Planning and Fleet introduced the report, which outlined the 6-month Economy and Environment Directorate Performance Assessment (DPA) and which is part of the Council's Performance Management Framework. The DPA provides information and analysis for the 6-month period April to September 2021 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) reminded Members 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, and that Members should focus on the elements applicable to Community and Leisure Services, Infrastructure, and Public Protection.

There were no questions received for Officers, and the Scrutiny Committee noted the contents of the report and the information contained in the Directorate Performance Assessment.

The meeting closed at 6.32 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 22nd March 2022.

CHAIR