



ENVIRONMENT AND SUSTAINABILITY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF THE MULTI-LOCATIONAL MEETING HELD IN PENALLTA HOUSE AND VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS ON TUESDAY, 21ST MARCH 2023 AT 5.30 P.M.

PRESENT:

Councillor D.T. Davies MBE - Chair
Councillor A. Hussey - Vice-Chair

Councillors:

M. Adams, R. Chapman, C.J. Cuss, N. Dix, M. Evans, A. Gair, S Kent, A. Leonard,
D.W.R. Preece, H. Pritchard, J.E. Roberts, S. Williams, C Wright

Cabinet Members:

Councillors: C. Andrews (Education and Communities), P. Leonard (Planning and Public Protection)

Together with:

M.S. Williams (Corporate Director for Economy and Environment), C Edwards (Environmental Health Manager), M. Jacques (Scrutiny Officer), J. Lloyd (Committee Services Officer), A Jones (Committee Services Officer)

RECORDING, FILMING AND VOTING ARRANGEMENTS

The Chair reminded those present that the meeting was being live-streamed and recorded and would be made available following the meeting via the Council's website – [Click Here to View](#) Members were advised that voting on decisions would be taken via Microsoft Forms.

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors C. Elsbury,

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

3. MINUTES – 7TH FEBRUARY 2023

It was moved and seconded that the minutes of the meeting held on 7th February 2023 be approved as a correct record and by way of Microsoft Forms and verbal confirmation (and in noting there were 12 for, 0 against and 0 abstention) this was unanimously agreed.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Environment and Sustainability Scrutiny Committee held on 7th February 2023 (minute nos. 1 – 4) 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

Mark Jacques (Scrutiny Officer) presented the report, which outlined details of the Environment and Sustainability Scrutiny Committee Forward Work Programme (FWP) for the period March 2023 to May 2023.

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 the reports scheduled for forthcoming meetings.

It was moved and seconded that the report recommendation be approved. By way of Microsoft Forms and verbal confirmation (and in noting there were 13 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.

REPORTS OF OFFICERS

Consideration was given to the following report.

7. NOTICE OF MOTION – FUEL POVERTY

Cllr Carol Andrews (The Cabinet Member for Education and Communities) as proposer of the motion advised the Scrutiny Committee of an amendment to the motion and that the Committee consider the Notice of Motion with the following amendment.

In response to public and media pressure Ofgem, the energy Regulator for Great Britain, has put in place a temporary ban on pre-payment meters, initially until the 31 March 2023. This has now been extended until energy companies sign up to the Ofgem Code of Practice which requires suppliers to have effective checks and balances in place when switching people to a smart meter. Under Ofgem rules companies must also offer payment plans people can afford and offer emergency credit for people who use a pre-pay meter and cannot top up.

This notice of motion calls on the Leader to write to the UK Government to pass legislation to prevent energy companies entering people's homes and fitting prepayments,

unless asked to do so by the householder concerned. In addition, people should be given the right to have pre-payment meters removed from their home.

Members discussed the Notice of Motion and It was moved and seconded that the report recommendation be approved. By way of Microsoft Forms and verbal confirmation (and in noting there were 14 for, 0 against and 1 abstention, this was agreed by the majority present.

8. LOCAL TOILET STRATEGY

The Cabinet Member for Planning and Public Protection presented the report which sought the views of the Environment and Sustainability Committee to ask them to consider the findings of the review and updated Local Toilet Strategy prior to it being, presented to Cabinet for a decision to adopt and publish the updated Local Toilet s Strategy.

A Member asked for confirmation as to how long the period has been since the Council shut the toilets down and Gelligaer Community Council took over running them. Officers apologised as they did not have the information but would circulate a response to the members of the committee.

Officers were, asked to provide clarification on the situation with Blackwood Bus Station toilets and if the third party cooperation had been, secured for the long term. Officers confirmed that they did not have the information to hand but would circulate after the meeting.

Issues with anti-social behaviour in Blackwood toilets was, discussed and Officers confirmed there have been incidents reported, CCTV cameras are present, and the area is on the high watch list by Gwent Police and Community Safety Wardens and is being, monitored.

Members sought clarification on the list of toilets available as it appeared that some of these were not open. Ceri Edwards advised that the list does need updating as some of those listed may no longer be providing access, this was being looked at and would be updated. The member agreed to confirm which toilets were not opening their doors to the public and would send this to Ceri Edwards.

Officers were, asked if a review had been carried out within a year. Members were, advised that the review was, delayed due to Covid. A full review has now been undertaken within the strategy. The Chair requested this be, circulated to members of the Scrutiny Committee.

The Chair stated that he was disappointed with the drop in numbers of businesses opening their toilets to the public. Officers confirmed the numbers have dropped Feedback from proprietors confirmed that it is due to the increase in the cost of living and the additional costs businesses face they are no longer prepared to provide toilets due to cleaning costs incurred.

The Scrutiny Committee considered and noted the contents of the report.

The Chair wished to put on record his thanks to the Vice Chair Cllr Hussey for all his help and support and thanked Members and to the Democratic Services Staff for doing a fantastic job.

The meeting closed at 6:01pm

Approved as a correct record and subject to any amendments or corrections agreed and recorded in the minutes of the meeting held on 2nd May 2023, they were signed by the Chair.

CHAIR