



ENVIRONMENT AND SUSTAINABILITY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF THE MULTI-LOCATIONAL MEETING HELD IN PENALLTA HOUSE AND VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS ON TUESDAY, 13TH JUNE 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, A. Leonard, D.W.R. Preece, H. Pritchard, J.E. Roberts, S. Williams, C Wright

Cabinet Members:

Councillors: P. Leonard (Planning and Public Protection)

Also in attendance: Cllr J. Jones, J. Reed, and Reverend P Cawthorne

Together with:

M.S. Williams (Corporate Director for Economy and Environment), C Edwards (Environmental Health Manager), J. Morgan (Trading Standards, Licensing & Registrars Manager), M. Jacques (Scrutiny 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, S Kent,

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

3. MINUTES – 2ND MAY 2023

It was moved and seconded that the minutes of the meeting held on 2nd May 2023 be approved as a correct record and by way of Microsoft Forms and verbal confirmation (and in noting there were 13 for, 0 against and 1 abstention) this was agreed by the majority.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Environment and Sustainability Scrutiny Committee held on 2nd May 2023 (minute nos. 1 – 6) 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.

REPORTS OF OFFICERS

Consideration was given to the following report.

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 June 2023 to March 2024.

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.

Members were advised that there is an addition which was not in the members packs. There was a request for an information report on the Highway Infrastructure Budget Apportionment 2023-2024 report, which will be included in the meeting scheduled on the 19th July 2023.

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 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. PUBLIC PROTECTION ENFORCEMENT ANNUAL REPORT 2022/23

The Cabinet Member for Planning and Public Protection presented the report and requests that members of the Scrutiny Committee to consider the review of Public Protection enforcement activities, CCTV provision and to note the activity in relation to Consumer Advice and to offer any views prior to presentation to Cabinet.

The Chair advised that the group would go through the report and request questions on each section and invited members to raise any questions and Ceri Edwards and Jacqui Morgan were available to answer any questions.

Questions were raised on the following items within the report.

Underage Sales - A Member queried the reference to high number of under-age vape sales and only two test purchase operations were conducted and sought clarification as to whether there would be more operations conducted and are we confident that we have enough volunteers.

Officers confirmed that there were less test purchases due to covid and having to arrange a new team of volunteers to be recruited. Following the recruitment process test purchasing did not start until December 2022. In the last financial year there were 25 attempts to purchase and of those 5 were sold vapes. In the current year there have been 16 attempts so far this year and 2 have been sold vapes, further activities will be conducted throughout the year based on any complaints received or intelligence that provides a reason for us to do so and if successful formal action will be taken.

Trading Standards Wales are currently working on an all Wales project as this is an issue across Wales which will include advice to businesses test purchases, sampling and education, awareness raising.

Members were informed that in addition to the figures already provided there were 58 advisory visits conducted last year following complaints or concerns about age restricted products, the majority of which were vape sales. It is a major concern, with limited resources but we will prioritise the complaints or concerns brought to our attention.

A member sought confirmation on what is going to be introduced now that is different from previous years and what was successful or not successful.

Officers confirmed that when new legislation comes out the first step is to educate retailers on their responsibilities and young people on what they can or cannot purchase, then test purchases are carried out and the figures are reported. Previous reports have shown that numbers of sales have been reduced by proactive advice and test purchase activity/formal action.

Due to covid test purchases were not being undertaken, previously. Trading Standards Wales produced an annual report on all underage sales test purchase activity and results Comparing previous years and levels of activity can demonstrate whether interventions are having an impact.

CCTV - A member raised a query on CCTV on waste transfer site at Penmaen Depot and concerns about the number of break ins and the police not attending to get the footage to prosecute intruders, as the council has not reported the break ins. The member referred to 75 break ins at the site and questioned what the point of the cameras is.

Officers confirmed cameras must be in the right place and be maintained. If an intruder is caught on camera, it does send an alert to the control room who can monitor and if need be, call the police, footage is retained, and a daily log of any incidents is sent to the relevant service area and the police for them to pursue and if need be, to request any footage held. The Officer was not able to comment on the Penmaen depot specifically but could check if there were any issues with them. The Member said that he would email the officer about his specific concerns at the depot outside of the meeting.

Another member commented on the issues at Penmaen depot and stated that previous prosecutions did not proceed due to lack of evidence and confirmed that they would discuss these issues with the new inspector.

Illegal Tobacco Activities - A member asked if sales of drug paraphernalia on display in shop windows in Blackwood and requests that something is done to stop these from displaying these items in their windows.

It was confirmed that officers are aware of this and advised that it is across the borough. There is a possibility of going down the route of a Community Protection Order however to do this evidence would need to be provided that an offence has been committed in relation to that specific premise and to date there has not been any evidence.

Members were reassured that this is something that will continue to be monitored and if any information or evidence is found action will be taken. The Community Safety Team will continue to consult with the police and if any firm evidence is found then it would be looked at.

A Member stated that these organised criminals and that more feet are required on the ground to deal with these criminals.

A member asked if there is an increase of importation of illegal tobacco that is not being taxed which are being served under the counter.

Officers confirmed illicit tobacco is a major problem across Wales and England, this covers illicit tobacco and counterfeit tobacco or illegal imports which do not comply with our labelling or health warnings, Officers informed that test purchases are made at such premises and inspections carried out with the help of tobacco detection dogs.

Members were advised that there is an All Wales operation, where additional funding has been provided from Welsh Government to enable extra test purchases to tackle these issues and were advised that there are a number of prosecution cases ongoing.

Environmental Health, Community Safety, and food Hygiene & Standards – A Member asked if visits to food banks are undertaken to check out health and safety.

Officers confirmed yes there are checks being carried out, and that officers are engaging with the food banks who are providing a very good service but unfortunately during these times a lot more people must rely on foodbanks, officer are advising organisers to ensure that they are adopting correct temperature checks and using hygienic premises and that the people working there are adequately trained. Officers encourage them to use prepacked foods to take out the risk of cross contamination from raw foods to cooked foods.

A Member asked for an example of ways to look to tackle environmental issues that have not been previously implemented.

Officers confirmed there is an enviro crime team in Environmental Health with officers designated to all areas, they all engage with community safety teams, and various other teams across the authority, they deal with complaints of fly tipping, littering, dog fouling etc. The Officers try to patrol the hotspots based on the higher volume of complaints within their areas and they mount campaigns to target specific areas, engage with schools to educate, quite proactive, but it is difficult to catch individuals as it is a case of being in the right place at the right time.

Officers are currently testing covert cctv cameras in countryside areas to try to catch people responsible for fly tipping. Updates will be reported back to the Scrutiny committee in the future.

A member stated that on the country walks there are a lot of dog bags thrown into the trees and asked if there is anything that can be done about this, glad to hear covert cameras are being used and also expressed concerns about anti-social behaviour at the bus station in Blackwood.

Officers confirmed that bags in trees is a problem and suggests that if members have information on reoccurring problems and locations to report back to us and we will liaise with the waste department to see if bins can be installed or replaced. In relation to the covert cameras this is being piloted and will feedback the findings to the group.

In relation to the toilets at the bus station this is an ongoing problem area, there is a public space protection order in place and is being monitored, fixed penalties have been issued by CSW officers, however it is difficult to enforce as some individuals are homeless. Some perpetrators of the anti-social behaviour suffer with substance misuse, and these are referred to the police, CCTV is used and CSWs use body cameras This toilet is identified in the local toilet strategy, and we are doing our best to patrol and deal with individuals when they are encountered.

A query was raised on the acceptable behaviour contracts issued. Are these contracts successful.

Officers were not able to give percentage breakdown. The younger element is referred to the youth offending service who are quite active in engaging with the individuals which involves home visits and school visits regularly. There are various steps, and it is found that the majority get removed quite early in the process but sometimes there are a few who go on to commit further offences.

The Chair asked if members of the scrutiny committee could visit the CCTV centre in Tiryberth to have an insight into how it all works. This was confirmed if members contact Jacqui Morgan, she can organise the site visits.

The Chair requested that for the last meeting of the Environment & Sustainability Scrutiny Committee on the 19th July 2023, if possible, could all members attend the meeting in the Chamber.

Thanks are passed to all officers.

The meeting closed at 18:33pm

Approved as a correct record and subject to any amendments or corrections agreed and recorded in the minutes of the meeting held on 19th July 2023, they were signed by the Chair.

CHAIR