



## **CORPORATE AND REGENERATION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

**MINUTES OF THE MULTI-LOCATIONAL MEETING HELD IN PENALLTA HOUSE  
AND VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS ON TUESDAY, 7TH NOVEMBER 2023 AT 5.30 P.M.**

PRESENT:

Councillor G. Johnson - Chair  
Councillor A. McConnell - Vice Chair

Councillors:

M. Adams, G. Enright, C. Forehead, A. Gair, L. Jeremiah, J. Jones, S. Kent, M. Powell, D. W. R, Preece, C. Thomas, L. Whittle, W. Williams, and C. Wright

Cabinet Members:

Councillors P Leonard (Planning and Public Protection), C. Morgan (Waste, Leisure, and Green Spaces), and J. Pritchard (Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Prosperity, Regeneration and Climate Change).

Also in attendance:

Councillors C. Andrews and T. Heron and Speaker Ms C Rogers (Ruperra Castle Preservation Trust)

Together with:

M. S. Williams (Corporate Director for Economy and Environment), R Kyte (Head of Regeneration and Planning), P. Hudson (Business Enterprise Renewal Team Leader), P. Thomas (Heritage and Placemaking Officer), R. Thomas (Planning Services Manager), D. Lucas (Team Leader Strategic Planning), C. Forbes-Thompson (Scrutiny Manager), and 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 D. Harse, J. Fussell, C. Mann

## **2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Declarations of interest were received from the following members:

Councillor A McConnell declared a personal interest on agenda item 9 as she is a Trustee of Ruperra Trust. Councillor McConnell could remain in the meeting and vote whilst the item was discussed.

Councillor G. Johnston declared a personal interest on agenda item 9 as he is a Member of Cadw. Councillor Johnson could remain in the meeting and vote whilst the item was discussed.

Councillor C Wright declared a personal interest on agenda item 9 as she is a Member of Cadw. Councillor Wright could remain in the meeting and vote whilst the item was discussed.

Councillor J. Pritchard also declared a personal interest on agenda item 9 as has signed a petition in support of Ruperra Castle. As a Cabinet Member he would not be part of the debate or vote.

## **3. CORPORATE AND REGENERATION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE HELD ON 26<sup>TH</sup> SEPTEMBER 2023**

It was moved and seconded that the minutes of the meeting held on 26<sup>th</sup> September 2023 be approved as a correct record and by way of Microsoft Forms (and in noting there were 13 for, 0 against and 1 abstentions) this was agreed by the majority present.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Housing and Environment Scrutiny Committee held on 26<sup>th</sup> September 2023 (minute nos. 1 – 5) be approved as a correct record.

## **4. CONSIDERATION OF ANY MATTER REFERRED TO THE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE CALL-IN PROCEDURE**

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

## **5. CORPORATE AND REGENERATION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME**

The Scrutiny Officer presented the report, which outlined details of the Corporate and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee Forward Work Programme (FWP) for the period November 2023 to March 2024.

It was moved and seconded that the report recommendation be approved. By way of Microsoft Forms (and in noting there were 13 for, 0 against and 1 abstention, which included 1 verbal vote) this was agreed by the majority present.

RESOLVED that the Corporate and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee 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 reports.

## **7. NOTICE OF MOTION – PRIDE IN VETERANS STANDARD**

Councillor Andrews as LGBTQ+ Champion and Councillor Heron as the Armed Forces Champion request that the Scrutiny Committee consider the Notice of Motion and make appropriate recommendation to Council adopt the Pride in Veterans Standard (PiVS) to visibly demonstrate its commitment to providing inclusive and welcoming support to LGBTQ+ Veterans serving personnel and their families. The Notice of Motion was introduced as set out in 5.1 of the report.

The Chair invited members for questions.

The Leader of the Plaid group confirmed that the Plaid party fully supports the Notion of Motion and wished to congratulate the Council on holding their first Pride Event.

A member sought clarification on why a separate flag was being used for gay veterans. Members were advised that there were numerous reasons but it's about recognising the wrongs of the past, correcting them and ensuring there is equality in all areas. Additional information will be shared to members following this meeting.

Following consideration of the report it was moved and seconded that the recommendations be approved. By way of Microsoft Forms (and in noting there were 14 for, 0 against and 0 abstentions, which included 1 verbal vote) this was unanimously agreed.

RECOMMENDED that:-

The Notice of Motion as outlined in paragraph 5.1 be supported.

## **8. DRAFT GREATER BLACKWOOD MASTERPLAN**

The Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Prosperity, Regeneration and Climate Change introduced the report and thanked the Members who represent the Greater Blackwood area that met with him to discuss the Draft Greater Blackwood Masterplan. The report seeks the views of the Scrutiny Committee on the draft Masterplan prior to its presentation to Cabinet. The draft Masterplan seeks to stimulate economic, social, and cultural activity, making the most of the area's town centre, employment sites, leisure venues and tourist attractions. It sets out a development strategy and framework for delivering these outcomes and will form the basis for bids from funding streams for projects in the area. Members were advised that the Council has worked in partnership with the UK Government, Cardiff Capital Region, the Private Sector and CCBC are tasked with working together for the benefit of the Region. Following the debate of this committee the draft Masterplan will go to Cabinet on 15<sup>th</sup> November 2023 and a six week public consultation will go live on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of January 2024.

The Scrutiny Committee were pleased to see the mention of a train station at Crumlin in the plan, members felt that there are excellent links to Oakdale Business Park and tourist opportunities for Penmaen Park that could benefit. In addition, it was stated that development of the Navigation Colliery Site into business units could be a possibility. The committee were advised that Crumlin station would be a direct strategic link to Oakdale, any development at Navigation however would need to be considered against flood risks.

Members highlighted the significant issues with bus services for residents wishing to travel to Blackwood, where some areas have a limited hourly service, which can be cancelled several times per week making it difficult to plan and have confidence that there will be return journeys available. These issues are reported to the bus company and copied to MP's and Welsh Government. It was therefore suggested that this could be included in the Masterplan. Members highlighted the recent debate at Joint Scrutiny and that this was an issue both locally and nationally.

The Scrutiny Committee were advised that bus services are not part of the Masterplan which is related to land use. However, the issues of bus services are recognised as a serious matter. There have been meetings with Welsh Government officials and Ministers to discuss these issues and we are awaiting news; however, we are not optimistic that there will be a positive solution with a significant factor being the reduced level of passengers that have not returned to pre-covid levels.

Members commented that many people are not aware of the old railway lines abandoned many years ago, some of which are overgrown or used as cycle tracks, these provided transport links into many areas not covered by railways at present, for example the Scenic drive in Cwmcarn.

The Scrutiny Committee commented on the comprehensive document which is meant to provide a regeneration response to the economic situation we are in. It was suggested that more in-depth analysis and detail will be needed for the individual projects listed in the plan as well as costs. Concerns were expressed on whether there will be funding available to bring these plans to fruition. The committee were informed that the Masterplan sits underneath the Regeneration Strategy, individual project in each Masterplan will be developed with detailed analysis and costs should they move forward. The plan shows our ambition and will form a basis for any bids for funding.

Following consideration of the report it was moved and recommendations be approved. By way of Microsoft Forms (and in noting there were 14 for, 0 against and 0 abstentions) this was unanimously agreed.

RECOMMENDED that:-

1. The Draft Greater Blackwood Masterplan be endorsed by the Corporate and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee and that it is recommended to Cabinet for the draft Masterplan be published for comment for a six-week period.
2. The Draft Masterplan be published for comment for a Six-week period between the 3 January and 14 February 2024.

## **9. LISTED BUILDINGS AT RISK REGISTER AND STRATEGY**

The Cabinet Member for Planning and Public Protection presented the report which provides the Scrutiny Committee with an opportunity to consider the Listed Buildings at Risk Register and Strategy that sets out a framework for the preservation and enhancement of listed buildings at risk over the period 2023-2028.

Members were advised that a survey has been carried out on all listed buildings throughout the Caerphilly Borough by The Handley Partnership Consultants who have surveyed 433 structures of which the majority are privately owned and are well maintained, it has revealed that there are 72 buildings which are at risk and are either in disrepair, disuse or are derelict. An allocation of £400k from the Shared Prosperity Fund is to be utilised to implement a grants programme to upgrade and maintain several of these historical buildings. Members were requested to note the report and provide any comments prior to the report going to Cabinet.

The Chair invited the Guest Speaker from Ruperra Castle to speak to the Committee.

The Guest Speaker introduced herself as a Caerphilly resident and Trustee of the Ruperra Castle Preservation which is a membership led charity whose main aim is to preserve Ruperra Castle. Members were advised that a free community event is run by the charity to encourage people to celebrate their heritage and as part of this external first aid training was funded by the Council for which the speaker thanked the Council and would also like to thank the Cabinet Member for Planning and Public Protection and Officers for commissioning the survey and analysing the results. The Survey highlights challenges in stopping decay and identifies in the Action Plan that Ruperra Castle as the highest priority Building at Risk in the whole of the County.

The Castle is the only example of a pageant Castle in Wales which has deteriorated since the fire in 1941 and is a scheduled Monument and a Grade 2\* listed building. The Charity is seeking to add 3 additions to the action plan which would be in the public interest and in the Councils control. The first addition suggests that making the Castle safe should be a priority to ensure it is no longer a danger to the public and residents.

A Map illustrating the issues was shared on the screen for Members showing the Castle and its surrounding grounds it was highlighted and discussed how the condition of the Castle and surrounding grounds has deteriorated and concerns for public safety and the building. Following talks with Caerphilly Public Rights of Way and Cadw another closure is in place until May 2024 to ensure public safety. It was stated that planning permission had been granted for a nearby stables to be converted into flats but there is a real risk of the Castle falling onto it, and onto the track which will be used by residents and visitors. So up to 36 people could live on site, but there are currently no plans to make the Castle safe.

Members were asked to recommend that the following are added to the action plan for Ruperra Castle on page 35:

1. Press Cadw and the owner to undertake a structural survey of Ruperra Castle, a vital first step to making the Castle safe for the public and residents.
2. Determine a safe radius around the Castle while essential repairs are undertaken by the owner.
3. Refuse to accept any further planning applications for Ruperra unless accompanied by a Conservation Management Plan for the entire site.

The speaker thanked the committee for the opportunity to speak on behalf of the Trust and hoped that action will be taken before it is too late, or another tower at Ruperra Castle falls.

The Chair thanked the Speaker and invited members to ask any questions.

A Member requested confirmation as to who controls the Churches when they are sold on and converted for example into houses, especially where cemeteries are in the grounds. Members were advised that Listed buildings fall under the responsibility of the local planning authority, some exceptions for Churches which are in ecclesiastical, where churches are

still being used as a church and they have their own decision making bodies and the local planning authority do not deal with these but will deal with them if the church is no longer in use. Scheduled Monuments like Ruperra Castle would be the responsibility of Cadw. The Heritage and Placemaking Officer offered to meet any councillors on site to talk through any sites and can also provide a briefing note on the legislation and who has responsibilities for the listed buildings and will also investigate and feedback on burial grounds.

A Member sought clarification as to what the meaning of a holistic approach in dealing with the listed buildings as mentioned in the report. Members were advised a holistic approach is where the opportunity to bring back into use one building on a site with multiple listed buildings, that will be considered as the best way forward. This is because buildings have a better chance when they are in use, so on some sites buildings may be brought into use one at a time and then move on to the next.

A Member requested that a meeting with Cadw should be arranged to discuss how the spending of monies on preserving historical buildings and request that they work with the Ruppera Conservation Trust and Officers within the Council and then move onto The Site at Crumlin where the monies should be used to preserve that site next. The Head of Regeneration and Planning confirmed that the Council meet regularly with Cadw and there is a meeting tomorrow where this will be raised. A verbal update will then be provided to Cabinet.

Following consideration of the report it was moved and seconded that the recommendations be approved. By way of Microsoft Forms (and in noting there were 13 for, 0 against and 1 abstention) this was agreed by the majority present.

RECOMMENDED that:-

1. The contents of this report and the 2023 Buildings at Risk Register be noted.
2. Cabinet note the comments of the Corporate and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee on the report.

## **10. REVISED TOWN CENTRE MANAGEMENT MODEL – UPDATE REPORT**

The Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Prosperity, Regeneration and Climate Change introduced the report to update Scrutiny Committee on the pilot of the Town Centre Stakeholder Meetings, which were originally approved for a 12-month trial and to ask Members to recommend to Cabinet to adopt this new Town Centre Management Model on a permanent basis and formally disband the old Town Centre Management Groups. The Housing and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee in November 2021 unanimously agreed to trial alternative. The new format has been held over the 18 months. Meetings are now being held at venues within each town centre to make attendance more convenient and at a time more desirable for businesses. Often the venues are private businesses not only to support town centre businesses but to encourage the business community to come together and support one another. Town centre stakeholders have positively received the new model.

A Member acknowledged how this is an important function throughout the town centres and how it is working well.

The Head of Regeneration and Planning requested to put on record that the improvement of working with businesses is a testament to the hard work of the Town Centre Team who have only been fully staffed over the last 18 months. The survey demonstrates that the hard work is starting to pay off. The officers are on the ground talking to businesses every day and it is starting to pay dividends. It was acknowledged that this is a key role within the

regeneration team in terms of driving forward beneficial changes to our town centres and is a critical discretionary service and thanked the Member for acknowledging this.

The Chair stated that Newbridge town centre has recently gone online with free Wi-Fi helping people to connect within the town, which is a good thing and can see that the Council are looking to encourage people into the town centres. It is good to see that the Council is looking to cover all areas.

Following consideration of the report it was moved and seconded that the recommendations be approved. By way of Microsoft forms (and in noting there was 10 for, 0 against and 2 abstentions which included 1 verbal vote) this was agreed by the majority present.

RECOMMENDED that:-

1. The adoption of the new Town Centre Stakeholder meetings as part of the new Town Centre Management Model be approved.
2. Agree the formal disbanding of the old Town Centre Management Groups be agreed.
3. The new Terms of Reference for the Town Centre Stakeholder Meetings as set out in Appendix 1 of this report be approved.

The meeting closed at 18:41 p.m.

Approved as a correct record, subject to any amendments agreed and recorded in the minutes of the meeting held on the 9<sup>th</sup> January 2024.

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CHAIR