



## **REGENERATION AND ENVIRONMENT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

### **MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD AT PENALLTA HOUSE, YSTRAD MYNACH ON TUESDAY, 28TH OCTOBER 2014 AT 5.30 P.M.**

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**PRESENT:**

Councillor D.T. Davies - Chair  
Councillor Mrs E.M. Aldworth - Vice-Chair

**Councillors:**

C.J. Cuss, R.T. Davies, N. Dix, C. Elsbury, R.W. Gough, Ms J.G. Jones, S. Kent, Mrs P. Leonard, M.J. Prew, Mrs D. Price, A. Rees

**Cabinet Members:**

D.V. Poole (Community and Leisure Services), T.J. Williams (Highways, Transportation and Engineering)

**Together with:**

S. Aspinall (Acting Deputy Chief Executive), P. Elliott (Head of Regeneration and Planning), M.S. Williams (Head of Community and Leisure Services), M. Eedy (Finance Manager), T. McMahon (Community Regeneration Manager), J. Reynolds (Leisure Facilities Manager), P. Martin (Conversation and Design Officer), J. Jones (Democratic Services Manager) and R. Barrett (Committee Services Officer)

**Also present:**

Ms S. Byrne (Pricewaterhouse Coopers)

#### **1. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENT**

The Chairman welcomed Sara-Jayne Byrne of Pricewaterhouse Coopers, who was in attendance to observe the evening's proceedings.

#### **2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Mrs A. Blackman, J. Bevan and Mrs E. Stenner, together with Cabinet Member K. James (Regeneration, Planning and Sustainable Development).

**3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

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

**4. MINUTES - 4TH SEPTEMBER 2014**

RESOLVED that the minutes of the special Regeneration and Environment Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 4th September 2014 (minute nos. 1 - 3) be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

**5. MINUTES - 16TH SEPTEMBER 2014**

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Regeneration and Environment Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 16th September 2014 (minute nos. 1 - 13) be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

**6. MINUTES - 1ST OCTOBER 2014**

RESOLVED that the minutes of the special Regeneration and Environment Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 1st October 2014 (minute nos. 1 - 3) be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

**7. CONSIDERATION OF ANY MATTER REFERRED TO THIS 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.

**8. REPORT OF THE CABINET MEMBERS**

The Scrutiny Committee received reports from Cabinet Members T.J. Williams and D.V. Poole. Councillor Williams also presented a report from Councillor K. James, Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Planning and Sustainable Development.

The report from Councillor K. James informed Members that Partnerships for Renewables, in association with Caerphilly County Borough Council were awarded the Best Use of Renewable Energy in the Public Sector at this year's prestigious Wales Green Energy Awards. Members were also advised that CCBC has been successful in receiving £1,000,000 from the WG's Vibrant and Viable Places - Tackling Poverty Fund. The investment will help facilitate a focused, concentrated and integrated effort in one particular area of Rhymney where poverty and social deprivation is particularly prevalent, in addition to the refurbishment of Hafod y deg as a multi-agency resource centre for Rhymney.

In regards to the ongoing Nant Llesg surface mine application, it was advised that the consultation process with the public and statutory bodies would begin w/c 3rd November 2014.

Members raised a query in regards to the Council's plans to increase renewable energy usage, and the Head of Regeneration and Planning explained that participation in solar panel schemes was one area that was currently being investigated. The consultation process in relation to Nant Llesg was queried and Members confirmed that this would follow normal protocol in regard to planning procedures, including a 21-day consultation period and advertisement of the planning proposals on the CCBC website.

Councillor D.V. Poole, Cabinet Member for Community and Leisure Services, presented his report and congratulated the Building Cleaning Service in their recent achievement in reaching the finals of the APSE National Service Awards in the Service Team of the Year – Best Soft Facilities Management Category.

Fleet Management have recently completed driver training in the new driver Certificate of Professional Competence (CPC), which involves the delivery of 35 hours of training for each driver every 5 years. Any driver that does not hold a driver CPC after 9th September 2014 cannot drive a vehicle over 3.5 tonnes. The training has been delivered to all CCBC drivers and agency drivers, together with drivers from Blaenau Gwent and Torfaen Councils.

The Cabinet Member recently attended the Coach of the Future launch at Ty Penallta, an annual event which kick-starts the coaching careers of young volunteers, with the model for the event now emulated by a number of other local authorities.

Reference was made to the recent Special Regeneration and Environment Scrutiny Committee of 30th July 2014 and the proposal to close some of the bowling greens within the Authority as part of the Medium Term Financial Plan. At the meeting, Members were unable to support this proposal and suggested that all bowls clubs in the borough be contacted to discuss self-management, with their views brought back to Committee for consideration. A meeting between Officers and representatives of the bowls clubs took place on Friday 18th October 2014 Ty Penallta. Following a productive meeting, all of the bowls clubs in attendance agreed to discuss the proposals with their Committees, with the next step for the Authority to hold separate meetings with each club.

Members were informed that the Licensing Committee have agreed some proposed improvements to the assessment process for taxi applicants, including policies on intended use and also previous convictions. New vehicle inspection standards are also proposed and a consultation exercise will take place on the planned changes, which will also ask for views on whether the Hackney Carriage fare tariff should be reviewed (having remained unchanged since 2010).

Discussion took place regarding the recent changes to bin collection days and the Cabinet Member advised that following some slight adjustments, the new schedule was operating efficiently. Members made reference to collection issues in their wards as the result of these changes and the Cabinet Member confirmed he would speak to the Waste Strategy and Operations Manager to establish what had happened in relation to this. Members also discussed issues in their wards where some residents were not retrieving their refuse and recycling bins from the street following their waste collections. It was confirmed that the Authority had a number of procedures in place to deal with such issues and that Officers were actively encouraging residents in these areas to retrieve and store their bins correctly.

Members also discussed the recent meeting with the bowls clubs, with it confirmed that the majority of clubs within the Authority had attended the meeting. The content and outcome of the meeting was clarified to Members, and further discussion took place in relation to self-management and the possibility of grant funding and voluntary sector advice being made available to these clubs. It was requested that advance notice be given of the future meetings with the bowls clubs in order to afford local ward members the opportunity to attend these meetings.

A query was raised regarding the recent CPC driver training provided to Blaenau Gwent and Torfaen Councils and the Cabinet Member confirmed that remuneration had been received from these local authorities for this training.

Councillor T.J. Williams, Cabinet Member for Highways, Transportation and Engineering, advised Members that flood prevention works at Glen View Terrace in Ynysddu would be completed by the end of October, which represents an investment of £180,000 and has been funded by grant money secured from the Welsh Government. The Highway Operations

Group were congratulated in their recent achievement in being shortlisted as a finalist for the APSE for the Highway Winter Maintenance and Street Lighting Service of the Year Award.

The Committee were informed of major re-surfacing/reconstruction works along the A468/A469 Caerphilly bypass (Trecenydd to Pwllypant roundabout) which commenced on Saturday 25<sup>th</sup> October and will be of 3 weeks duration, with the road closed to eastbound traffic with traffic diverted along the A470 to Abercynon and into the borough via Nelson. Regular updates will be provided by Officers on progress and any changes to the programme of works.

Members were pleased to note the improvement works to Glen View Terrace and asked for their appreciation regarding the work of Engineering Officers on this matter to be recorded. A query was raised regarding the refilling of grit bins in specific areas and the Cabinet Member asked for further details to be forwarded to him so that this could be addressed by the relevant Officers.

Reference was made to the major works along the A468/A469 bypass and Members queried if bus timetables would be adjusted during this period in order to minimise disruption to schools and colleges. The Cabinet Member confirmed that the Transport department were dealing with this matter and arranged to provide this information to Members.

A query was raised regarding the criteria surrounding the repair of potholes and if the Medium Term Financial Plan would have an impact on this, with the Cabinet Member confirming that the criteria remained unchanged.

The Chair thanked the Cabinet Members for their reports.

## **9. CABINET REPORTS**

None of the Cabinet reports listed on the agenda had been called forward for discussion at the meeting.

## **REPORTS OF OFFICERS**

Consideration was given to the following reports.

## **10. COMMUNITIES FIRST PROJECT DELIVERY**

Tina McMahon, Community Regeneration Manager, together with Pauline Elliott, Head of Regeneration and Planning, presented the report, which provided Members with an overview of the Communities First (CF) projects delivered to date in each cluster, their aims and anticipated outcomes in relation to deprivation. This report had been prepared as the result of a Member's request to the Regeneration and Environment Scrutiny Committee on 1st July 2014.

The report explained that since April 2012, Communities First has been renewed as a Community Focused Tackling Poverty Programme. This continues to have a geographical focus, concentrating on the most deprived communities in Wales, but there is now increased focus on ensuring the most vulnerable individuals, families and groups in these communities are supported. There is a clear expectation that the programme's resources will be devoted primarily to those most in need. In some cases, this will include people living outside CF boundaries who can properly benefit from specific projects or activities supported by the programme. 52 Clusters (groups of Lower Super Output Areas) across Wales have been identified through the Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation, with four of these identified clusters within Caerphilly: Caerphilly Basin (41 projects), Mid Valleys East (35 projects), Mid Valleys West (39 projects) and Upper Rhymney Valley (42 projects).

In 2013/14, each Cluster established a local Delivery Plan, identified by key priorities in terms of tackling poverty. This delivery was supported by a Delivery Team and led by a Cluster Manager, with their roles stipulated by Welsh Government (WG). It is considered essential by WG that each cluster, and the programme as a whole, is able to demonstrate what is being achieved through the use of CF funding. A new Outcomes Framework has been created, focusing on creating Prosperous Communities, Learning Communities and Healthier Communities, and is currently being realigned by WG with the Families First and Flying Start programme to develop a Collaborative Framework for these three anti-poverty programmes.

Progress for the first year of delivery has been positive, with many important lessons learned to further optimise delivery and outcomes within future years. Cluster staff have worked hard in terms of planning, implementation and monitoring, to adapt to the new format of CF. Throughout the year, a huge range of projects have been developed and carried out across the three Communities First themes, with excellent links between JobCentre Plus and other agencies, and with high levels of resident engagement attained as a result. Members' attention was directed to Appendix 1 of the report, which outlined the full range of projects and measured effort, quality and effect to demonstrate the achievements of these projects within each of the Caerphilly clusters.

Discussion of the report ensued, and in response to Members' queries, it was confirmed by Officers that resident participation in the projects was voluntary, although a number of residents did attend in order to achieve contributions towards their Universal Credit payments.

Reference was made to a number of project targets and outcomes detailed within the appendix, particularly in relation to 'Relax Kids', with concerns raised that the concentrated efforts of staff were having little impact on participation levels. Officers explained that the outcomes displayed were a balanced snapshot of communities and in view of the fact that it was the first year of the programme, it was anticipated that there would be improvement evident in the projects next year when the changes to the alignment of the Collaborative Framework came into effect. Members were pleased to note the participation levels of the 'Street Games' project and viewed this as a positive success for the local community.

In relation to the Families and Schools Together (FAST) projects, Members queried the selection criteria and it was confirmed that the project was run by Save The Children, with interested schools approaching Communities First to be considered for participation. It was arranged for further information regarding selection criteria to be forwarded to Members, together with participation levels data, which had been unavailable at the time of the report being produced. Discussion also took place in regard to the WG's new Lift Programme which had recently been launched in a number of Welsh Clusters, including Caerphilly Basin.

The cost to the Authority of running the Communities First Project was queried and it was confirmed that the cost was fully funded by the Welsh Government, with Officers responding to general queries relating to funding.

Members thanked Officers for the detailed report and noted the progress made in delivering the first year of the Communities First Programme for 2013/14 in line with Welsh Government Outcomes.

#### **11. 'THE VALUE OF HISTORIC PLACES' CONSERVATION STRATEGY FOR THE HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT 2014-2019**

Pat Martin, Conservation and Design Officer, presented the report, which outlined the stakeholder engagement undertaken in respect of the Draft Conservation Strategy for the Historic Environment 2014-2019, and sought Members' views on proposed changes to the Draft Conservation Strategy as a consequence of public consultation.

The report detailed the need for and the scope of a Conservation Strategy, with Officers outlining the list of statutory designations within the county borough to be included within the remit of the Strategy (encompassing listed buildings, scheduled ancient monuments, historic parks and gardens and historic landscapes). The Strategy will include a number of priority objectives, which will be reviewed after five years.

The report outlined the consultation process (with copies of the Draft Conservation Strategy made available for public view) and summarised the three responses received. Subsequent amendments to the draft Strategy had been actioned, with any further comments received following presentation to Members to be included in the final version of the Strategy. Officers also responded to Members' queries in relation to an historic asset of national significance (a scheduled ancient monument and listed building). It was arranged for a copy of the Conservation Strategy to be provided to Members.

It was moved and seconded that the recommendations in the report be forwarded to Cabinet for approval. By a show of hands, this was unanimously agreed.

RECOMMENDED to Cabinet that: -

- (i) The stakeholder engagement undertaken in respect of the Draft Conservation Strategy for the Historic Environment 2014-2019 (July 2014) be noted;
- (ii) The amended Conservation Strategy be named 'The Value of Historic Places';
- (iii) The strategic framework, which will positively and beneficially conserve, enhance and where appropriate preserve the historic environment for its intrinsic value and for containing important historic assets, be approved.

## 12. STRATEGIC REVIEW OF LEISURE FACILITIES

Mark S. Williams, Head of Community and Leisure Services, together with Jeff Reynolds, Leisure Facilities Manager, presented the report, which advised the Committee of the outcome of elected Member consultation on the strategic review of leisure facilities within Caerphilly County Borough and to set out the next steps relating to this process.

With the aid of a slideshow presentation, it was explained that the Authority currently operates eleven Leisure Centres which comprise a mix of joint use Centres co-located on school sites and Centres on non-school sites and open to the public all day. The most recent of these is Newbridge Leisure Centre which opened in 1996. The annual visitor numbers, revenue and maintenance costs and user subsidies were outlined to Members, with it explained that in light of the current financial situation and rising costs, the current portfolio of leisure facilities was unsustainable and thus in urgent need of review.

The range of factors and statistics included in the review were outlined, including condition of existing facilities, actual and latent demand, population and housing projections, travel distances and times, education reform proposals, and other considerations. Weightings were applied to each of these factors which resulted in an overall score and rank order for the existing facility mix. The review discussed a range of conclusions based on the three Local Development Plan (LDP) strategy areas, comprising of the Heads of the Valley Regeneration Area (HOVRA), Northern Connections Corridor (NCC) and the Southern Connections Corridor (SCC) and returned three key recommendations:-

- (i) Rationalise the facilities in the SCC to two multi-functional Centres offering a wide variety of provision. The centres to be located in Risca and Caerphilly. This would mean the closure of other centres in the SCC such as Bedwas and St Cenydd.

- (ii) Rationalise the facilities in the NCC to two multi-functional Centres offering a wide variety of provision. One of the centres to be located in the Eastern part of the NCC at Newbridge and the other in the Northwest of the NCC (Bargoed or Aberbargoed) to assist in serving both the NCC and HOVRA while also replacing Heolddu Leisure Centre. This would mean closure of other centres in the NCC such as Cefn Fforest.
- (iii) Where Leisure Centre provision currently exists on some comprehensive school sites, the basic facility for the delivery of the school curriculum (and community usage where appropriate) should be offered to the school in the first instance with appropriate funding.

The report also outlined an indicative timeline dependant on the future outcomes of the MTFP and Members' attention was directed to Appendix 1 of the report, which contained the full Strategic Review of Leisure Facilities.

The review document was sent to all elected Members in July 2014 for consultation, with three responses received and outlined in the report, together with the relevant Officer responses. It was emphasised to Members that there was no funding available in the capital programme in order to deliver the key recommendations but that the current position was unsustainable and thus it was important to develop a long-term strategy in regards to the future of leisure facilities within the Borough.

Members thanked the Head of Community and Leisure Services for his report and detailed discussion of the review ensued. In regards to the recommendation to rationalise facilities within the LDP strategy areas, it was explained that consideration had been given to each facility and the accessibility of nearby alternative facilities within each of the areas.

Concerns were raised that rationalisation could lead to over-demand of the remaining facilities and it was explained that the development of multi-functional Centres would offer a wide variety of provision especially designed to cope with such a demand. Members also stated that they would not wish to see any of the Centres close until a suitable replacement facility was implemented.

A query was raised in relation to the development of the old St Ilan's school site as a possible base for a new leisure centre, and it was explained that this matter was still under consideration but had been delayed by subsequent developments relating to the current financial climate and the Authority's Medium Term Financial Plan.

The possibility of collaboration with outside agencies in order to achieve funding was raised by Members, and it was queried whether the encouragement of increased participation by outside agencies (such as youth rugby clubs) could be progressed, with it was explained that the maintenance figures detailed were to maintain the current level of provision only and would not result in an enhanced level of service.

It was reiterated to Members that some of the Centres were around 40 years old and in need of extensive and continual maintenance works, with £2.3m in annual revenue costs and another £3.55m needed for future maintenance liability works, and thus it would not be sustainable to continually invest in some of the outdated facilities.

Members noted the contents of the report and unanimously endorsed the conclusions and recommendations arising from the strategic review, together with plans for wider consultation with service users prior to consideration by Cabinet at a later date.

### **13. LEISURE CENTRES – MANAGEMENT OPTIONS**

Mark S. Williams and Jeff Reynolds presented the report, which advised Members of the advantages and disadvantages of various Leisure (Trust) Models and highlighted the key

features of the various options for managing Leisure Centres. The report had been prepared following a Member's request at the Regeneration and Environment Scrutiny Committee meeting of 16th September 2014.

The report explained that in recent years there has been an increase in the number of Local Authorities outsourcing their Leisure provision, and the report examined a variety of research and evidence to provide an overview of the key features of the various management models. It was explained that there are four management models most commonly used to deliver Leisure provision in Local Authorities:-

- (a) In House Management;
- (b) New, Not For Profit Distributing Organisation (NPDO) – Trust;
- (c) Existing (or hybrid) Not For Profit Distributing Organisation (NPDO) – Trust;
- (d) Private Sector.

It was explained that no single management option provides better services and that there are pros and cons for each model. The key features of each model were further outlined in Appendix 1 of the report, together with equalities, financial and personnel implications for each of these options.

It was emphasised to Members that the rationale and reasons for transferring to an external provider must be clear from the outset and that a NPDO (Trust) must not be set up simply for financial reasons or as a short-term financial expedient. This was further explained in section 4.8 of the report which drew on case studies of Authorities who outsourced to NPDOs, with it reiterated that such a transfer could be irreversible

Members discussed the report and stated that it would be useful to see the current management structure of leisure centres detailed, together with information relating to trustee liability and risk management. Officers detailed the processes in relation to outsourcing to Trusts and the operation of these Trusts, including details of annually negotiated revenue grants and management fees.

Following consideration of the report, Members thanked the Head of Community and Leisure Services for his presentation and noted the contents of the report.

#### **14. BUDGET MONITORING AND TRADING ACCOUNT REPORT 2014/2015**

Following a Member's request, this report was brought forward from the list of information items as an item for discussion.

Mike Eedy, Finance Manager (Environment Directorate), presented the report, which informed Members of the most recent budget monitoring position for 2014/2015 for the Environment Directorate service divisions, namely Regeneration, Planning and Economic Development, Engineering, Public Protection and Community and Leisure Services. The report also outlined the latest trading position for the Direct Labour and Direct Service Organisations (DLO/DSOs), including Network Contracting Services (NCS), Building Cleaning DSO and Fleet Management and Vehicle Maintenance DSO.

Reference was made to the revenue budget position for each of the service divisions of the Environment Directorate based on the most current financial information available. Projected outturn figures for the financial year are compared with the budget to show anticipated under/overspends, and more detailed budget monitoring figures were outlined in Appendix 1 of the report. The most recent figures indicated a total under spend of £451,000.

It was explained that Regeneration, Planning and Economic Development had a net under spend of £343,000 but that some of this had been earmarked for the Medium Term Financial Plan for 2015/16. It was explained that there had been a shortfall in income generation in



Countryside Services in relation to car parking charges at country parks, with the projected income of £85,000 underachieving by £40,000 as a result of the delayed implementation of this MTFP initiative. It was anticipated that the full benefit of the introduction of these charges would be realised in the financial year 2015/16.

There were no particular variations or issues identified within Engineering or Public Protection. In regards to Community and Leisure Services, Members' attention was drawn to an under spend of £108,000 in relation to Waste Management and Cleansing, partly due to residual waste due to the commencement of the Project Gwyrdd interim contract in September, resulting in expected reduced landfill and landfill tax costs. Leisure Centres are also performing well, following the setting of challenging income targets.

Reference was also made to the Medium Term Financial Plan Savings for 2014/15, with full details contained within Appendix 2 of the report. The 2014/15 revenue budget for the Environment Directorate included targeted MTFP savings of £2.712m and the projected over/under spends discussed within the report take account of these savings targets.

As reflected in the budget monitoring figures, most of the approved MTFP savings introduced for 2014/15 have or will be achieved by the end of the financial year. However, there are some where full achievement is not likely due to late implementation. These included car parking charges at country parks and others that require further review and monitoring, including increased income generating targets in relation to Leisure Centres, Catering, Licensing, waste collection charges and civic amenity site charging/restrictions. It was advised that there would be a further budget monitoring report in the new year which would further detail the financial situation to date.

Discussion of the report ensued and reference was made to staff catering and school meal uptake. It was confirmed that there had been a slight decrease in staff restaurant income but that the situation would continue to be monitored, and that school meal uptake remained steady following the recent price increase. A query was also raised in relation to the deletion of vacant posts within the Directorate, with it confirmed that service delivery had not been affected as a result of this MTFP measure.

Discussion took place in regard to the implementation of car parking charges at country parks and Members commented that they would wish to see a split in the next report detailing the revenue within this area. Concerns were also raised in regards to the impact of the introduction of these charges. The Head of Regeneration and Planning detailed the reasons for the delay in implementation and reiterated that country parks were a discretionary service, with the introduction of charges providing a valuable contribution towards the Authority's Medium Term Financial Plan. It was also confirmed that no additional costs in workload were incurred as a result of Officers administering these charges.

It was confirmed that the next Budget Monitoring Report for the Environment Directorate was planned for February 2015. Members requested that this report be included as an item for discussion on the relevant Regeneration and Environment Scrutiny Committee agenda.

Members thanked the Finance Manager for his presentation and noted the contents of the report, together with details of the budget monitoring position contained within the appendices.

## **15. REQUESTS FOR REPORTS TO BE INCLUDED ON THE NEXT AVAILABLE AGENDA**

1. Arising from the reference to the changes to the assessment process for taxi drivers, as outlined in the report of the Cabinet Member for Community and Leisure Services Report, Councillor M. Prew requested that information relating to the monitoring of taxis licensed within the county borough, with specific reference to those who undertake school contracts, be brought forward to a future meeting. Councillor Prew was advised that this would be a matter for the Licensing Committee.

**16. INFORMATION ITEMS**

The Committee noted the following item for information, full details of which were included within the Officers reports. There were no items brought forward for review.

- (1) Voluntary Sector Liaison Committee Minutes – 17th September 2014.

The meeting closed at 7.57 pm

Approved as a correct record and subject to any amendments or corrections agreed and recorded in the minutes of the meeting held on 9th December 2014, they were signed by the Chair.

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CHAIR