



REGENERATION AND ENVIRONMENT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD AT PENALLTA HOUSE, YSTRAD MYNACH ON TUESDAY, 19TH MAY 2015 AT 5.30 P.M.

PRESENT:

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

Councillors:

M. Adams, J. Bevan, C.J. Cuss, N. Dix, C. Elsbury, R.W. Gough, S. Kent, M.J. Prew, A. Rees

Cabinet Members:

N. George (Community and Leisure Services), K. James (Regeneration, Planning and Sustainable Development), D.V. Poole (Housing), T.J. Williams (Highways, Transportation and Engineering)

Together with:

P. Elliott (Head of Regeneration and Planning), A. Bolter (Group Manager - Strategy, Funding and Support), K. Kinsey (Acting Engineering Projects Group Manager), L. Lane (Solicitor), I. Raymond (Performance Management Officer), P. Rossiter (Energy and Water Officer), C. Forbes-Thompson (Scrutiny Research Officer) and R. Barrett (Committee Services Officer)

1. CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENT

The Chair opened the meeting and in welcoming Members to the first Regeneration and Environment Scrutiny Committee meeting of the new financial year, referred to the challenges and pressures that lay ahead in respect of the Medium Term Financial Plan.

2. BEREAVEMENT – COUNCILLOR RAY DAVIES

The Chair acknowledged the sad news that Councillor Ray Davies had recently passed away following a short period of illness, and referenced the warm tributes paid to the late Member in the previous week at the Annual Meeting of Council.

3. WELCOME – NEW MEMBER

The Chair welcomed Councillor Mike Adams to his first meeting of the Regeneration and Environment Scrutiny Committee. It was noted that Councillor Adams had previously been a Member of the former Living Environment Scrutiny Committee and he informed Members that he was pleased to be returning to this area of Scrutiny.

4. NEW CABINET MEMBER – COMMUNITY AND LEISURE SERVICES

It was noted that Councillor Dave Poole, the outgoing Cabinet Member for Community and Leisure Services had recently been appointed to the post of Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Housing. The Chair extended best wishes to Councillor Poole and requested that Members' appreciation for his contribution to the Scrutiny Committee be placed on record.

Councillor Nigel George was also in attendance, having subsequently being appointed as the new Cabinet Member for Community and Leisure Services following Councillor Poole's change in portfolio. Councillor George was congratulated on his appointment and welcomed to the Scrutiny Committee.

5. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Mrs A. Blackman, Ms J.G. Jones, Mrs P. Leonard, Mrs D. Price and Mrs E. Stenner.

6. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

7. MINUTES – 31ST MARCH 2015

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Regeneration and Environment Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 31st March 2015 (minute nos. 1 – 11) be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

8. CALL-IN PROCEDURE

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

9. REPORT OF THE CABINET MEMBERS

The Scrutiny Committee received reports from Cabinet Members K. James, T.J. Williams and D.V. Poole.

Councillor K. James, Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Planning, advised Members that a busy programme of major summer events had recently begun, including the Caerphilly Food Festival which was held on 9th May and the Urrd Eisteddfod 2015, which would be taking place between 25th - 29th May 2015. Other forthcoming events include the Caerphilly 10K and the Blackwood Beach Party in June, the Risca Summer Festival and Big Cheese in July, together with the Kings Fayre, Caerphilly Motoring Festival and the Welsh Model Show "A World in Miniature" at Llancaiach Fawr.

Members were updated on Phase 3 of the Newbridge Regeneration Scheme. Contractors have been appointed to deliver the Public Realm Enhancement Scheme and Riverside Walk projects, and both works are progressing well, with completion anticipated in mid-June 2015. Nine local businesses have also been supported through the Building Improvement Grant scheme, with over £230,000 of grant aid allocated.

The Cabinet Member was thanked for his presentation and discussion of the report ensued. A query was raised regarding the impact of the improvement works in Newbridge and the impact of a recent fire in the town on local businesses. The Cabinet Member explained that contrary to beliefs and concerns raised by Members, a recent footfall study had indicated that visits had actually increased during the improvement works. Regarding the recent fire that had destroyed a building in the town, the Cabinet Member explained that there were hopes to rebuild the affected area but that this was outside the remit of the Authority in that the building was privately owned. The Cabinet Member also responded to a query relating to timescales for the allocation and spending of Building Improvement Grants funding.

Councillor T.J. Williams, Cabinet Member for Highways, Transportation and Engineering, advised Members of recent improvements carried out by the Engineering Projects Group. The 2016/16 carriageway surface dressing programme commenced on 29th April 2015 and is anticipated to be completed within three weeks (weather permitting). Also taking place is the 2015/16 carriageway micro asphalt programme which is due to be completed by 19th June 2015.

Members were informed that the Highways Operations Group has recently undertaken a trial with a permanent coldlay product used to fill potholes. The trial will be reviewed at six and twelve months to determine its effectiveness before a decision is made on its viability. Anticipated benefits to the scheme include efficiency savings from reduced waiting time at quarries and improved logistics, and health and safety improvements due to zero exposure to hot materials. Additional economic and safety benefits will be determined post-trial assessment.

In regards to the Transportation Engineering Group, the Pwllpant roundabout project has reached tender stage. It is anticipated that the scheme will commence in the late summer/autumn and could go on for 12 months, and every effort is being made to being made to minimise disruption during this time.

The Cabinet Member was thanked for his report and discussion ensued. Members raised complaints from local residents about being given insufficient notice to remove their cars prior to potholes being filled in. The Cabinet Member asked that details of the affected areas be passed to him so that he could investigate the matter further.

A query was raised regarding the Velocity Patcher that had been referred to at the previous Scrutiny Committee meeting and Officers advised that this was due to arrive within the next two months. Members noted that the Authority had hired one several years ago and commented on its efficiency.

Reference was made to the repainting of road signage/patterns following resurfacing works. The Cabinet Member explained that these would be reinstated as soon as possible following the required works and cited areas where these had already been repainted.

Councillor D.V. Poole presented his last report in his capacity as Cabinet Member for Community and Leisure Services. He informed Members that the Authority has now been delivering its residual waste to the Project Gwyrdd plant for a number of months, with the commissioning of the plant now settled and delivery streams fairly constant. Since September 2014 approximately 16,500 tonnes of waste have been delivered to the plant, which represents some 20% of the whole 5-authority partnership input for this period. Members were advised that the partnership input is as predicted and therefore does not cause any issues in terms of the guaranteed minimum tonnage agreed within the contract.

Members were also updated in respect of recent work carried out by the Sports Development Team. To achieve Sports Wales' aspirations, Sports Development are aiming and working towards developing wider, more appealing offers of community sport through both formal and informal recreational opportunities to engage children, young people and adults of all abilities. Changes to the approach in delivering community sport in Caerphilly have seen a focus on increasing participation, tackling inequalities and contributing to wider societal issues by ensuring strong sporting pathways exist throughout Caerphilly County Borough that involve a variety of partners to work towards a common good, which links into the regional sporting collaboration effort across an Active Gwent agenda.

The Cabinet Member cited a recent example of the impact of this work at a FAB Friday project in Caerphilly, where police anti-social behaviour statistics for the first three months of this year indicated a drop of 36% in February and a further 36% in March when compared to this time last year. A further sporting example was a Sports Caerphilly-organised primary schools netball competition, the aim of which was to give the local primary schools the chance to take part in netball and extra curricular activity within their local communities. The finals were held at Blackwood Comprehensive School on 30th April 2015, with the top two schools (Ysgol Cwm Derwen and Maesycymmer) representing Caerphilly in the All Wales Primary School Netball Championship Finals on Monday 18th May at Ebbw Vale Sports Centre.

The Cabinet Member was thanked for his report and the Chair invited questions from the Committee. A Member asked for confirmation of the overall result of the netball competition final and the Cabinet Member advised that he was awaiting news of the result.

A Member queried the future plans for Cefn Fforest Leisure Centre and the Cabinet Member referred to the Council's Leisure Strategy. He explained that the plan centralised on four leisure centres within the county borough and that there was a need to review facilities as some sites were coming to the end of their viable life and would involve considerable costs to restore them to a modern standard. He referred to the use of partnership strategies, explaining the potential for some sites to become multi-purpose facilities (incorporating such uses as community schemes, GPs and pharmacies) and emphasised the need for community involvement in such instances.

In respect of the above, the Chair referred Members to the Review of Existing Outdoor Recreation and Leisure Facilities that had been presented to Members at the previous Scrutiny Committee meeting.

10. 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.

11. MONMOUTHSHIRE AND BRECON CANAL ACTION PLAN

Pauline Elliott, Head of Regeneration and Planning, together with Antony Bolter, Group Manager, Strategy, Funding and Support, presented the final draft version of the Monmouthshire and Brecon Canal – Crumlin Arm Action Plan to the Group.

This Action Plan was drafted following a request from Members of the Monmouthshire and Brecon Canal Crumlin Arm Working Group, so that the future direction of investment and activities relating to the Canal could be considered. The draft Action Plan was considered and endorsed by Member of the Canal Group at their meeting on 26th February 2015 and was subsequently considered and endorsed by the Corporate Management Team in March 2015.

The Action Plan sets out the history of investment, maintenance and development of the Canal as a local asset, and also describes a list of potential actions and activities that could develop it further over the years ahead. It was explained that the actions were not prioritised but can be used flexibly depending on the availability of funding. For example, the Canal forms part of ongoing work to develop a regional European Regional Development Funding (ERDF) proposal based on tourism and urban priorities. The final draft version of the Action Plan was appended to the report.

Discussion of the report ensued and a number of queries were raised in relation to funding opportunities. Officers confirmed that in addition to the ERDF bid, there was also the potential for other funding sources to arise, such as Heritage Lottery funding, together with other smaller pots of funding. Officers referenced the Risca Town Centre Action Plan and explained that if development in this area was successful, there could be an opportunity to allocate part of the funding towards Canal enhancements in the Risca area.

Reference was made to the several authorities through which the Canal flowed and budget cuts currently being experienced by each authority, and a Member queried the feasibility of enhancing the Canal in such times of austerity. The Member also queried the possibility of passing Canal improvements over to be undertaken by the private sector. Officers reiterated the positive effects of Canal development on local tourism and explained that whilst not a priority for the Authority, the Action Plan had been developed in anticipation of future funding becoming available. Officers also referenced private developers involved in the regeneration of Risca Town Centre and confirmed that they would look at the feasibility of approaching them in regards to Canal enhancements.

Members commented on the positive effects of the Canal in relation to tourism and local businesses, and also referenced the positive impact that flooding improvement works and available water sources could have on the local environment.

Following a request from the Chair, Officers agreed that they would provide a further update report to the Committee in six months time, and also report back on their communications with the private sector in regards to Canal enhancement works.

By a show of hands and as agreed by the majority present (and in noting that there was one abstention in that a Member was not present for the whole of the debate) the Scrutiny Committee endorsed the Action Plan as the strategic and operational document for the Canal in Caerphilly County Borough.

12. IMPROVEMENT OBJECTIVE: CARBON MANAGEMENT – REDUCE OUR CARBON FOOTPRINT

Ian Raymond, Performance Management Officer, and Paul Rossiter, Energy and Water Officer, presented the report, which provided Members with the details of the proposed Council Improvement Objective for 2015-2016 relevant to the Regeneration and Environment Scrutiny Committee and sought the approval of Members on this proposed objective.

Officers advised that Cabinet has undertaken a review of the Council's existing Improvement Objectives and a new set of objectives for 2015/16 (one per scrutiny committee) is in the process of being finalised (as listed in Appendix 2 of the report). For the Regeneration and Environment Scrutiny Committee, Cabinet has decided to recommend to Council that a new Objective entitled **Carbon Management: Reducing our carbon footprint** be published. The

report outlined the criteria to be considered when selecting an Improvement Objective and further information relating to this was detailed in Appendix 1 of the report.

Members were advised that since the report had been produced, consultation results on the Council's proposed Improvement Objectives had shown that 73% of those residents surveyed agreed that Carbon Management was an important or very important issue. In response to a query from the Chair regarding availability of these results, Officers confirmed that the results had only become available on the day of the meeting. The Chair suggested that further consultation outcomes be circulated to the Scrutiny Committee in advance and Officers agreed to circulate the results of this consultation to Members.

With the aid of a slideshow presentation, Mr Rossiter explained to Members the reasons why Carbon Management had been selected as an Improvement Objective. He referenced the effects of global warming and explained that each ton of carbon savings also represented a significant saving to the Authority in terms of carbon emission tax. He outlined the Authority's Carbon Reduction Strategy, which aimed for an aspirational 45% reduction in carbon emissions, and explained that this would be achieved with the help of the Council's Energy Team, who monitor and measure energy and carbon emissions.

Members were advised that across the UK, CCBC is one of the better performers in terms of energy savings and are in the top ten on some key performance indicators within the Salix Invest To Save Scheme (a national scheme for public sector bodies). Officers explained that the funding associated with this scheme has been used effectively and has already reduced the Authority's carbon footprint by some 2621 tonnes of carbon dioxide output per annum, with associated lifetime energy cost savings circa £4.5m. There remains significant improvements that would bring several benefits in addition to reducing the Council's carbon footprint, such as reduced energy bills and improved working conditions within the Council's building stock.

Officers outlined how the Carbon Management Improvement Objective will be achieved. This includes the Carbon Reduction Strategy, good housekeeping such as turning off lights during periods of non-occupancy, providing more carbon reduction awareness training for Council staff, visits to schools to raise general awareness, and the reissuing of energy audits and benchmarking information. Use of the Invest to Save Scheme will also be a key part of the strategy. Asset management will be examined in regard to office closures and ensuring that buildings used for the relocation of staff are more energy efficient than the previous building. There will also be energy investment in new schemes, such as the new secondary school within Oakdale Business Park, the use of solar energy and other new technologies, and the use of energy certificate and performance measurement reports. The Authority will also monitor progress via the use of energy certificates and total lifetime energy savings.

Officers were thanked for their presentations and discussion of the report ensued. A Member raised a query in regards to the carbon footprint of the Council's fleet vehicles. Officers explained that the Energy Team have responsibility for measuring all aspects of gas, electricity and water consumption and their associated carbon emissions, and that fleet vehicles are part of another department within the Council. There is also uncertainty as to the feasibility of accurately measuring fleet vehicle emissions. Officers offered to take Members' comments back to the Corporate Management Team for further discussion in relation to the remit of this Improvement Objective.

A Member queried the measures being undertaken to reduce carbon emissions from boiler systems in Council buildings. Officers outlined the cuts to the Authority's school boiler replacement programme and referenced the significant savings made in cases where boilers had been changed, and also explained that in the event of site closures, usable boilers could be relocated elsewhere. A Member made reference to Pontllanfraith House, which Officers had named as one instance where replacement boilers had been installed, and it was confirmed that these boilers had been replaced approximately two years ago. Officers explained that in the event of Pontllanfraith House closing, they would look at relocating the

boilers elsewhere. In response to a Member's query regarding a PFI school, Officers also confirmed that due to contractual arrangements, CCBC pay the annual utility bills for this site but that responsibility for boilers and maintenance for this school rest with the on-site facility management company.

A Member referenced savings efficiencies in respect of street lighting and expressed concerns that these could lead to increased instances of anti-social behaviour. Officers outlined the switch towards LED lighting (which has resulted in lower energy emissions) and confirmed that these efficiencies were an area that could potentially be re-examined. Officers also responded to other general queries in respect of street lighting.

Comments were received in respect of the carbon emission tax and a Member also suggested that refuse collections could be rescheduled to achieve carbon savings.

A Member queried the incentives available for schools to improve their energy emissions and also referenced a previous request in regards to vehicles being taken home by employees. Officers referenced examples where a number of schools had taken advantage of Salix energy loans, and outlined further details of the Salix Invest to Save Fund, which operates investments as a loan paid back over 0-10 years, thereby providing funds available for re-investment in energy efficiency schemes over coming years. A query was raised regarding the use of solar energy and Officers explained that a number of sites utilised small-scale solar photovoltaic (PV) systems but that there was currently no budget available for investment in this technology.

Following consideration of the report, it was unanimously agreed that subject to the provision of the consultation information requested, that the Improvement Objective "Carbon Management: Reducing our carbon footprint" be supported and that delivery progress of the Objective be monitored by the Regeneration and Environment Scrutiny Committee.

13. REQUESTS FOR REPORTS TO BE INCLUDED ON THE NEXT AVAILABLE AGENDA

There were no requests for reports received.

14. INFORMATION ITEMS

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

- (1) Bryn Compost Liaison Group Minutes – 13th January 2015;
- (2) Voluntary Sector Liaison Committee Minutes - 18th March 2015;
- (3) Grants To The Voluntary Sector Panel Minutes - 25th March 2015;
- (4) Bargoed Town Centre Management Group Minutes - 11th March 2015;
- (5) Blackwood Town Centre Management Group Minutes - 20th March 2015;
- (6) Caerphilly Town Centre Management Group Minutes - 24th March 2015;
- (7) Risca Town Centre Management Group Minutes - 31st March 2015;
- (8) Regeneration and Environment Scrutiny Committee Forward Work Programme.

The meeting closed at 6.36 pm.

Approved as a correct record and subject to any amendments or corrections agreed and recorded in the minutes of the meeting held on 30th June 2015, they were signed by the Chair.

CHAIR