

RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held at the Council Headquarters, The Pavilions, Clydach Vale on Monday, 26th January 2015, 2014 at 5.00 p.m.

PRESENT

County Borough Councillor G.R.Davies – in the Chair

County Borough Councillors

J. Bonetto	J. Elliott	S. Powderhill	M. J. Watts
S Bradwick	G. Holmes	(Mrs) A. Roberts	M. Weaver
S. Carter	P. Howe	G. Smith	
(Mrs) L. De Vet	(Mrs) S. Pickering	(Mrs) M. Tegg	

Officers

Mr B. Davies – Director of Financial Services
Mr.P.Mee – Service Director, Public Health & Protection
Mr N. Wheeler – Director, Highways & Streetcare Services
Mr N. Pilliner-Pollution & Public Health Manager
Ms L. Davies – Environmental Protection Manager
Mr A Wilkins – Head of Legal Democratic & Corporate

39. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from County Borough Councillors L Langford and T. Williams

40. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

In accordance with the Code of Conduct, the Committee received the following declarations of personal interests in relation to matters pertaining to the agenda:

1. County Borough Councillor G. R. Davies in respect of Agenda Item 3, General Budget Consultation Process (Stage 2) –‘User of the Trade Waste Scheme’
2. County Borough Councillor M. J. Watts in respect of Agenda Item 3, general Budget Consultation Process (Stage 2) – ‘My daughter is involved in the Trade Waste Scheme’

41. MINUTES

RESOLVED – to approve the minutes of the Environmental Services Scrutiny Committee held on the 1st December 2014 as an accurate record subject to it being noted that (Mrs) A. Roberts requested a site visit to the Dinas Community Recycling Centre which had been not been recorded.

42. GENERAL BUDGET CONSULTATION

The Director of Financial Services provided Members with a presentation in respect of the General Budget Consultation Process advising of stage one consultation feedback which involved a number of engagement events where views were sought on Council priorities, council tax levels, council tax reduction scheme and budget saving ideas. A summary of the Stage 1 consultation feedback which took place during the period 10th November to 16th December 2014 was provided and included responses such as the preferred level of council tax, suggestions for further priorities and income generation ideas.

The Director of Financial Services outlined the timetable for Stage 2 of the general budget consultation process which will culminate in a review of feedback on the draft budget strategy by Cabinet mid February 2015. Members were reminded of the key headlines relating to the Welsh Government's final settlement which had been announced on the 10th December 2014 and of the Council's actions taken to date such as phase 2 and Leisure Services changes plus base budget requirement adjustments, including the senior management structure, expressions of interest exercise and changes in customer care. Attention was also drawn to the initial budget gap for 2015/16 and the key elements of the proposed strategy for 2015/16, subject to Cabinet approval, were reported.

The Director of Financial Services explained the Medium term Financial Planning and Service Transformation Reserve which has successfully supported transitional funding as part of the Council's Medium term Service Planning arrangements. In conclusion Members of the Committee were informed of the proposed budget allocation to services and of the latest projected budget gap to 2017/18 (subject to Cabinet approval of the 2015/16 strategy).

RESOLVED: that the view of the Environmental Services Scrutiny Committee be passed to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in consideration of the Council's General Budget Strategy Consultation Exercise, as follows:

1. **Is the uplift proposed for schools reasonable?**

Most Members were content with the proposal.

One Member commented that it is money well spent however will there come a time when year after year we have to consider saying 'no'?

2. **Is the efficiency expectation reasonable? Are there any specific areas / ideas / ways that efficiency actions could be delivered?**

Members sought clarification in terms of the expressions of interest and senior management structure equating to savings of £2.6M and commented that it should be made clearer and presented on an annual basis. The Director of

Financial Services explained that there are two elements as follows included in next year's savings:-

- General invitation to staff - expressions of interest £1.9M; and
- £0.7M further savings as a result of the Chief Officer Restructure

A Member queried when the expressions of interest would be implemented? April 2015? The Director of Financial Services explained that those employees who expressed an interest have already left their employment and therefore savings are already being made in the current year and referenced the quarter 2 performance report.

The Director of Highways and StreetCare Services confirmed that the Business Support review aims to rationalise support and with regard to the Highways Maintenance Service review it is clear that efficiencies and cost savings can be achieved whilst maintaining levels of service.

3. Budget Strategy - Do you agree with the other elements of the budget strategy?

A Member requested an update in respect of the changes to the Trade Waste recycling and the Director of Highways and StreetCare provided a response which confirmed the change would be implemented on the 1st April 2015. Members were informed that consideration is also being given to the timing of Trade Waste collections such as having evening collections which would minimise the disruption to the public.

A Member asked whether the proposed increases to the Trade Waste could mean that private providers could step in. The Director of Highways and Streetcare added that if that happened it would be to our advantage as it would have a positive impact on our recycling performance.

A Member raised concerns regarding the number of businesses spreading out their Trade Waste bags to avoid charges; more businesses should be joining the Council Trade Waste Scheme.

One Member commented that if everyone recycled there would be no need to increase the prices and therefore there should be legislation to force people and businesses to recycle.

4. Medium Term Financial Planning - What are your views on the use of the Transition Funding?

A Member raised a query in respect of the earmarked reserves and how much of the general fund balance remains. The Director of Financial Services explained that decisions taken in year 2014/15 have resulted in

savings being generated therefore replenishing the medium term transitional funding reserve. The remaining Medium Term Financial Planning and Service Transformation Reserve available to support the 2015/16 budget strategy equates to £7.1M. The general fund balance remains at £10m.

A Member commented that it has to be done as long as the money can come back into the fund

The Chairman voiced his concern for the future with the lack of budget for future years

5. What are your views on the proposed increase in Council Tax

Members questioned the amount of council tax which is lost through high numbers of council tax exemptions and queried the banding differences with other Local Authorities such as Cardiff. The Director of Financial Services responded that the Council tax base in Rhondda Cynon Taf CBC is very low and highlighted the differences between authorities. Members were informed that 43% of homes within RCTCBC are classed in valuation Band A with Cardiff for example having a significantly higher tax base.

One Member asked whether the Council is relying on more affluent areas to balance the books in respect of the Council Tax payments as it is linked to property price increases - The Director of Financial Services clarified that the Councils proportion of the Council Tax goes up universally (across the County Borough).

A Member added that there are so many properties in Band A that 3.8% is negligible in terms of income for the Council.

The Chairman commented that the proposed level of Council Tax of 3.8% will be more with a 5% Police Authority increase.

One Member commented that in comparison with some Local Authorities RCT has one of the lowest proposed increases and asked where we stand against others? The Director of Financial Services confirmed that based on early indications RCT would be in the bottom quartile for Council Tax increases.

6. Other Comments?

Members questioned the impact of service changes on the delivery of Highways & Streetcare and Public Health & Protection services. The Service Director Public Health & Protection informed Members that key services will continue to be delivered, although with reductions in service standards to some functions and the Director of Highways and Streetcare confirmed that with regard to Highways Maintenance efficiencies could be achieved whilst maintaining levels of service. The Director also confirmed

that the Fleet Utilisation Board was currently undertaking a review of the use of fleet vehicles.

REPORTS OF THE GROUP DIRECTOR, COMMUNITY & CHILDREN'S SERVICES

43. PROTECTING AND IMPROVING AIR QUALITY IN RHONDDA CYNON TAFF

The Pollution & Public Health Manager, Public Health & Protection presented a Power Point presentation to members of the committee in respect of the Council's duties to protect and improve air quality in the County Borough.

It was stated that the key areas for consideration by the local authority are Local Air Quality Management, Environmental Permitting of Industrial Installations and the use of statutory powers to deal with individual cases of pollution/nuisance from burning waste. Members were informed that reports and information regarding these issues are available on the Council website under 'Air Quality'.

Whilst the majority of Rhondda Cynon Taf experiences good air quality 13 areas within the County Borough have been declared Air Quality Management Areas (AQMA's) and the council's plan of action was outlined as to how it identifies and implements the required process to reduce the levels of Nitrogen Dioxide (NO₂) through multi agency work. Some examples of actions to overcome the issue were provided such as reducing permitted speed along major roads or encouraging initiatives such as car sharing or the uptake of public transport.

It was reported that whilst work to improve air quality in the respective areas involves prioritising actions and tapping into external grant schemes there is a grant scheme created by the Welsh Government which is used to improve local air quality. The Local Authority applied successfully in 2013 for the grant which has since been used to address local traffic management within specific areas.

Members were informed that the completion of major roadwork's such as the Church Village Bypass can have a positive impact upon air quality by significantly reducing the levels of NO₂. As a result of this and subject to Cabinet approval it was hoped to replace the existing Tonteg/Church Village/Llantwit Fardre A473 AQMA with two smaller AQMA's in Llantwit Fardre and Church Village.

The Pollution & Public Health Manager outlined the Environmental Permitting Regulations 2010 and explained the difference between Part A2 and B permitted activities which are regulated by the Local Authority and the

more complex A1 permitted activities which are regulated by Natural Resources Wales. Members were provided with details of the process by which permits are issued and subsequently inspected and of the Pollution & Public Health Team's 100% success rate at achieving compliance over the last three years with the programmed inspections.

The Pollution & Public Health Manager concluded his presentation with information relating to both smoke nuisance and pollution and outlined the council's powers to issue abatement notices should a neighbour's frequent bonfires cause a nuisance. Similarly, details of offences and subsequent fines arising from bonfires on trade premises which cause dark smoke and the appropriate disposal of trade waste were provided. In order to outline the issues addressed the Pollution & Public Health Manager reported that in 2014 the team dealt with 83 complaints of smoke nuisance from domestic bonfires and 69 complaints with regard to burning at Industrial/Commercial premises.

Following the presentation Members were given the opportunity to ask questions of the Pollution & Public Health Manager and did so in relation to the role of the team in respect of new housing developments and producing air quality assessments when required and how the out of hours provision for the service functions. The Service Director Public Health & Protection responded to a query in relation to the life cycle and efficiency of the cremators in the County Borough.

RESOLVED to note the content of the report and the duties of the Council in respect of protecting and improving Air Quality in RCT

44. DOMESTIC NOISE NUISANCE

The Pollution & Public Health Manager presented his report in respect of the Council's protocol for Investigating Domestic Noise Nuisance in Rhondda Cynon Taf.

Members of the Committee were informed of the types of noise pollution the Pollution and Public Health team are asked to investigate and the protocol which has been adopted to investigate the domestic noise nuisance and those complaints from residents. Further detailed information regarding the key procedural issues within the protocol was relayed and the full copy of the Protocol was attached as Appendix one for information.

Details of the team's performance figures since 2011 were provided and it was identified that in 2014 92% of noise related complaints received a response from an officer within the 5 day target for responding to service requests.

In conclusion the Pollution & Public Health Manager confirmed that although the service changes will directly affect the resources available to tackle the high number of calls in respect of noise nuisance Members were assured that the investigation protocol would be regularly reviewed to ensure the service continues to operate as efficiently as possible.

There followed an opportunity for Members to ask questions of the Pollution & Public Health Manager in respect of domestic noise nuisance and the process for receiving and logging calls from the public in the first instance was explained.

Following consideration of the report it was **RESOLVED** to note the content of the report in respect of the noise nuisance investigation protocol.

45. PRESENTATION FROM THE DIRECTOR OF HIGHWAYS AND STREETCARE SERVICES – STREETCARE UPDATE

The Director of Highways and Streetcare Services presented a power point presentation to Members of the Committee which provided an update in respect of streetcare issues in the following areas;

- Changes in Waste
- Waste PI Update
- Street Cleansing Update

Details were provided in respect of many changes which have taken place in Waste for 2014/15 such as the change in Council policy within the Community Recycling Centres which has seen an increase in the council's average recycling rate in excess of 90% and a new Community Recycling Centre due to open on the 1st April 2015 in the south of the County Borough. Further updates were given in respect of the Council's weekly nappy recycling scheme which now comprises over 5,000 residents and where an outlet has been sourced for the material to be recycled.

The results of an awareness campaign which has been undertaken in low participating areas were shared and the positive outcomes were evidenced by the increase in the percentage in the rates of dry recycling to over 90% and food waste to over 55%.

The Director of Highways and Streetcare Services outlined the Collaborative Change Programme (CCP) which the Council has signed up to in conjunction with Welsh Government designed to help understand the factors which contribute to the recycling rates, assess efficiency post implementation of the side waste policy and help form a picture of future recycling rates and cost base.

Waste PI's were demonstrated through the use of graphs to illustrate the percentage of municipal waste sent to landfill, waste received at the CRC's that is recycled and percentage of Green and Food Waste recycled. It was reported that following a food waste campaign in March 2015 the levels of food waste reached 500 tonne for the first time in three months.

Cleansing PI's showed the percentage of graffiti removed within 5 days at 100% as too was the percentage of abusive graffiti removed within the same time scales. Facilities Cleansing PI's and Enforcement PI's were also highlighted, the latter showing that in total 753 fixed penalties were issued in 2013/14.

Members of the Committee commented on the effectiveness of the awareness campaigns and how intelligence gathering can effectively address the issues of dog fouling within the County Borough.

G. R. Davies
Chairman

The meeting finished at 6.50pm