

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, 20th April 2015, 2014 at 5.00 p.m.

PRESENT

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

County Borough Councillors

J. Bonetto	P. Howe
S Bradwick	(Mrs) S. Pickering
S. Carter	G. Smith
G. Holmes	M. Weaver

Officers

Mr C. Jones – Service Director, Legal & Democratic Services
A. Griffiths – Head of Management Accounting
Mr P. Mee – Service Director, Public Health & Protection
Mr N. Wheeler – Director, Highways & Streetcare Services
Mr D. Batten – Head of Leisure, Parks & Countryside
Mr R. Wistow – Ecologist
Mr I. Woodland – Resilience and Sustainability Lead Advisor

Cabinet Members

County Borough Councillors (Mrs) A. Crimmings and A. Morgan

46. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from County Borough Councillors L. De Vet, L. Langford, S. Powderhill, (Mrs) A. Roberts, (Mrs) M. Tegg and T. Williams

47. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

In accordance with the Code of Conduct, there were no personal declarations of interests made, pertaining to the agenda.

48. MINUTES

RESOLVED – to approve the minutes of the Environmental Services Scrutiny Committee held on the 26th January 2015. .

49. MATTERS ARISING

In response to a query regarding a new Community Recycling Centre in the Northern part of the County Borough the Director, Highways & Streetcare Services explained that a bid has recently been submitted with any progress updates to be relayed to members of the Committee in due course.

50. EXCEPTION REPORT – COUNCIL PERFORMANCE REPORT– 31st DECEMBER 2014 (QUARTER 3)

The Head of Management Accounting presented to Members the Exception Report agreed at the meeting of the Chairs and Vice Chairs of Scrutiny, which outlined the financial and performance management information for Environmental Services for the period to 30th December 2014. Members were asked to consider key issues extracted from the main report that had been presented to Cabinet Performance and Resources Committee on the 19th March, 2015 (albeit in a different format to reflect the new structure. Members were assured that the information contained within this report, although based on the former 'Environmental Services Group' contains the appropriate data). and the two priority areas within the remit of the Committee i.e Protect People from Harm and Tackle Antisocial Behaviour and Keeping Rhondda Cynon Taf clean and 'green'. In addition and attached as Appendix B is a case study showing how the priority plan is making a difference. Members were informed that no Quarter 3 update had been provided in relation to Outcome Agreement performance as there had been no significant change in the performance position since Quarter 2.

Members were asked whether they are in agreement with the exceptions highlighted within the report.

Fly Tipping

A Member referred to the positive performance set out in the report in respect of the percentage of reported fly tipping incidents on relevant land cleared within 5 working days (statutory) yet queried the time taken for the Council to respond to a reported fly tipping incident which from the Member's personal experience had taken three weeks to address. The Director, Highways & Streetcare stated that this was not usual as highlighted in the positive performance for Environmental Services and any such incidents would be thoroughly investigated.

Staff Sickness Trend

One Member commented on the Staff Sickness Trend Comparison within the report which was showing a high overall sickness trend for the relevant services. It was queried whether the trend was due to long term stress related sickness following agreed service restructuring being implemented with less

staff covering the same workload and a further breakdown of the percentages was requested by the Member for the benefit of Committee in order to clarify and understand the reasons behind the increase. It was agreed that this would be reported.

Exceptions – Domestic Abuse

One Member enquired about the exceptions in relation to Domestic Abuse and the percentage of clients having an improved quality of life and feeling safer as a result of the Independent Domestic Violence Advisor service (IDVA) with the Quarter 3 performance measuring 81% compared to the target of 85%.. The Service Director Public Health & Protection confirmed that the measures reported are part of the accreditations of CAADA (Co-ordinated Action against Domestic Abuse) who work alongside high risk victims of domestic abuse. Confirmation was given that the overall performance for the local authority is encouraging with clients reporting positive outcomes in the form of cessation of abuse and feeling safer as a result of IDVA intervention. It was acknowledged that domestic abuse is a complex area which can involve other wider issues such as substance misuse or financial problems. IDVA manage 80-90 cases per quarter with the more complex cases affecting the outcome of the PI's.

Dog Fouling

A comment was made in respect of the low number of fixed penalty notices issued for dog fouling for Quarter 3. The Director, Highways & Streetcare Services confirmed that it is a difficult offence to capture with often little evidence provided by members of the public following their initial complaint. Currently several areas across the County Borough such as Barry Sidings and Dare Valley Country Park are being targeted by the Service as hot spot areas where dog fouling complaints have been received.

Green Waste

A Member of the Committee enquired about the systems currently in place to collect the green waste and specifically how the drivers know which areas to collect it from. The Director of Highways & Streetcare Services responded that this is the first year for the green waste to be collected separately and although the drivers do know which areas to target the service is also reliant upon members of the public contacting them on an individual basis. The Director added that currently the service is operating evening collections to keep up with demand and the tonnage collected to date has hugely increased.

Street Lighting

The Director, Highways & Streetcare Services confirmed that the time taken to repair street lamp failures has increased to 3.95 days in Quarter 3 compared to 2.7 days in Quarter 3 of 2013/14 and this is due to the volume of street lamps needing repair and the time it takes to carry out the work although the current performance is exceeding the annual target.

Domestic Bins (Black Bags)

A Member queried how the enforcement teams address the issue of additional black bags being left out for collection. The Director, Highways & Streetcare Services explained that initially stickers are placed on the offending bags and a note is made of the address which is verified. Enforcement officers will then speak to the appropriate residents and issue a fine if necessary. It was reported that the majority of residents are now complying. It was confirmed that flats and communal areas are proving more of a challenge for the enforcement officers in terms of identifying the owners and pursuing the FPN's if necessary.

Municipal Waste

The Director, Highways & Streetcare Services was asked whether the target for the percentage of municipal waste was challenging enough given that our Quarter 3 performance was 51.54% compared to a target of 55.00%. Committee was informed that although the target of 55.00% had not been achieved the current performance measures 53.6% with the figure having increased during February and March reaching a target of 60%. The collections and subsequent figures for dry waste, green waste and food waste have all improved and Members were assured that all the measures are in place to further improve the figures by means of enforcement and awareness campaigns.

Rodent Treatments

With 95% of rodent treatments being delivered within target times in Quarter 3 the Service Director, Public Health & Protection reported that it was too early to confirm whether the recently introduced charges for rodent treatments was having an impact upon the volume of calls to the service. The officer added it was estimated that there could be a 60% reduction in demand for the treatments although requests are still being received. It was confirmed that a progress report would be delivered to committee in due course outlining the effect of these charges upon the service.

A query was received from a Member in respect of the travellers who have been staying in Tylorstown recently and whether they are using council facilities for their waste collections. The Service Director Public Health & Protection confirmed that the travellers produce no waste and have composting toilets. As a result of this there have been relatively few complaints regarding the impact upon the site.

Substance Misuse

The Chairman referred to the % of cases closed as treatment completed (substance misuse) with Quarter 3 performance being 67% compared to a target of 74% and officers were reminded that a breakdown of figures in respect of both the local and National picture concerning substance misuse

had previously been requested. A request was also made for comparison figures on a National and local level in respect of domestic abuse cases. The Service Director Public Health & Protection reported that of concern are the number of clients who are not completing treatment for a number of reasons such as relapses or contracts being broken compared to the positive outcomes for those who successfully complete the treatment programmes. The officer confirmed that currently they are working with service providers to address the issue and added that the PI service provider reports every quarter whilst the benchmark for substance misuse is set by Welsh Government. It was confirmed that it may be possible to get comparative data for the domestic abuse PI from CAADA.

In addition comment was made in respect of the outcomes on pages 21 and 22 of the report regarding Mediation Services and ASB interventions, both of which were due to be reported to Committee in March 2015. It was confirmed that they would be followed up and reported to committee in due course.

RESOLVED to note the report

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

51. ACTION TO SAFEGUARD POLLINATING INSECTS

The Head of Leisure, Parks and Countryside acknowledged County Borough Councillor Carter, Member for Pontypridd Town, for bringing this item to the attention of officers and proceeded to provide some background on the decline of pollinating insects and how measures can be taken to safeguard them. The Officer commented that at this difficult time of service reviews and service changes it would be an opportunity to reduce the programme of Council grass cutting and to discuss the issue in greater detail with Members.

The Council's Ecologist outlined the key issues in connection with the diminishing numbers of pollinating insects and the reasons for their decline with the aid of Power point slides. The Officer confirmed that in response to this growing concern Welsh Government has launched a Pollinator Action Plan which is intended to support Welsh landowners by encouraging pollinating insects.

Members were advised that on a local level and through the ongoing Local Biodiversity Action Plan a number of pilot projects have been undertaken to ultimately develop a cost effective model which could be rolled out across the County Borough to address the issue. It was confirmed that the most effective way of addressing these concerns is to adopt relaxed management towards grass cutting to allow wildflowers to flower and seed to provide pollen for insects. The Ecologist provided Members with information on how this can be achieved in Rhondda Cynon Taf and the long term benefits that can be realised. The officer stressed the importance of keeping Members and residents informed of developments.

The Head of Leisure, Parks and Countryside concluded the presentation by stating that this was an opportunity to change our way of thinking towards land management, potentially reduce seasonal pressures and make budget savings.

One Member queried the progress of the Ty Rhiw Park, Taffs Well pilot scheme where it had been reported that the number of insects was diminishing through over management. It was confirmed by the Council's Ecologist that it was progressing well and he added that he could provide the Member with a list of insects which were now thriving as a result of the project. Another Member suggested that the Council also makes better use of areas of waste ground to tackle the issue and that more residents should be encouraged to take up allotments. When asked whether there were any pilot projects underway in the upper valleys it was confirmed that due to the number of open spaces in Taff Ely such as parks and sports fields which is why the pilot schemes have been concentrated in this part of the County Borough.

Following the presentation it was **RESOLVED** to note the contents of the report

REPORT OF THE GROUP DIRECTOR, CORPORATE & FRONTLINE SERVICES

52. EMERGENCY PLANNING DIVISION

The Resilience and Sustainability Lead Advisor presented his report with the aid of Power point slides which served to outline the work of the Emergency Planning Division which consists of a small team of four who are based in Merthyr Tydfil. There are 21 emergency planning officers throughout South Wales who deliver a number of Statutory duties which were outlined for the benefit of Committee. A further breakdown of duties under the Civil Contingency Act was also provided and other responsibilities were outlined such as working with colleagues within the Council to advise on planning matters, business continuity in emergency situations, to offer training and act as a link to other Partner Agencies. It was reported that the Emergency Planning staff are available 24hours to cover any eventuality. In conclusion the Lead Advisor advised that horizon scanning and forward planning are crucial to ensure that any emergencies are addressed efficiently and effectively.

The Leader of the Council acknowledged the important contribution made by the Sustainability Lead Advisor and his team with regard to several projects and behind the scenes planning, resolving inclement weather issues such as assisting Catering Direct to deliver Meals on Wheels in the winter months and putting plans in place to avoid any major incidents. Members acknowledged the importance of the team's work in their respective wards and expressed their gratitude for their continued support and it was **RESOLVED** to note the presentation.

53. SITE VISIT TO GLYNTAFF CREMATORIUM

Members of the Committee who attended the site visit to Glyntaff Crematorium in Pontypridd on the 23rd March 2015 summarised their visit and thanked those officers involved, namely the Administration Manager & Registrar and Crematorium Technician for their insightful tour of the facilities. Members commented on the empathetic and professional attitude shown by the staff and in particular the level of compassion shown towards members of the public at such sensitive times.

Committee **RESOLVED** to note the feedback of the site visit.

G. R. Davies
Chairman

The meeting finished at 6.15pm