

RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting of the Environmental Services Scrutiny Committee held at the County Borough Council Offices, The Pavilions, Cambrian Park, Clydach Vale on Monday, 1st December, 2014 at 5 p.m.

PRESENT

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

County Borough Councillors

J. Bonetto	P. Howe	M. J. Watts
S. A. Bradwick	(Mrs) A. Roberts	M. Weaver
S. Carter	G. Smith	
J. Elliott	(Mrs) M. Tegg	

Officers

Mr B. Davies – Director of Financial Services
Mr .P .Mee – Service Director, Public Health & Protection
Mr D. Batten – Head of Leisure, Parks & Countryside
Mr C Jones– Service Director, Legal & Democratic Services
Mr N. Wheeler – Director of Highways & StreetCare Services
Mr S. Owen – Head of StreetCare
Ms Nicola Jones – Strategy & Operations Officer, Waste Services

32. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from County Borough Councillors (Mrs) L. De Vet, (Mrs) S. Pickering and T. Williams

33. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

In accordance with the Members' Code of Conduct, the following declarations of Personal Interest were received:-

1. County Borough Councillor G. R. Davies in relation to Agenda Item 4 & 5 – 'Landlord-Provide misuse of substances services and use Trade Waste Services'
2. County Borough Councillor S. Carter in relation to Agenda Item 5 – 'Member of the Municipal Theatre Support Group – Personal & Prejudicial interest.

34. ANNOUNCEMENT

The Chairman commented that Mr Nigel Brinn, Service Director, Highways, Transportation & Strategic Projects had recently left the Authority and the Committee

RESOLVED that a letter be sent to him to thank him for his services to the Environmental Services Scrutiny Committee.

35. MINUTES

RESOLVED – to approve the minutes of the Environmental Services Scrutiny Committee meeting held on the 10th November 2014 as an accurate record.

35. GENERAL BUDGET CONSULTATION.

The Director of Financial Services provided Members with a presentation in respect of the General Budget Consultation Process, advising that there would be three key elements to the presentation, the service improvement priorities, the Council Tax Levels and the Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme. The Director stressed the fact that the general budget consultation did not include consultation activity in respect of proposed service changes (Funding for Nursery, Music and Sports Pitch Charges), as they as these are subject to separate consultations.

The Director of Financial Services outlined the consultation process which has involved the Older Persons Advisory Group, Schools Budget Forum and the public generally through an on line and hard copy questionnaire and with the opportunity also taken to gather feedback via the service change drop in sessions. Members' attention was drawn to some key facts relating to the funding of the Council's Revenue Budget and what it is spent on. The key headlines relating to the Welsh Government's Provisional Settlement which had been announced on the 8th October were outlined including a Reduction in resources for this council of -3.8%, the effect of a floor mechanism within the settlement and the Welsh Government direction that local authorities are to increase school budgets by 0.6% in 2015/16. Attention was also drawn to the starting point budget gap to 2017/18. It was reported that the Final Settlement was due to be announced on the 10th December.

The Director of Financial Services also reported on the Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme and the implications for the residents of the County Borough. Members were asked a series of questions and informed that their views, along with all other consultees would be used to assist Cabinet in its deliberations before producing their draft budget strategy which will be consulted upon as part of stage 2 of the general budget consultation process.

RESOLVED that the views of the Environmental Services Scrutiny Committee be passed on to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in consideration of the Council's Service Improvement Priorities and Budget Proposals (Council Tax) for 2015-2016 and the Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme, as follows:

1. Service & Improvement Priorities

Members of the Environmental Services Scrutiny Committee agreed that focus should continue to be on the seven improvement priority areas as set out for 2014-15 and felt these priorities should not be changed for the forthcoming year.

2. Budget Consultation 2015-16 -What are your views on Council Tax levels for 2015-16?

Members commented that the position was “grim” and asked for clarification on the Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme which the Director of Financial Services duly provided. Members were in agreement that the CTRS was a sensible scheme which will assist many residents.

One Member referred to the 1% increase in Council tax costing £0.235m in additional CTRS and asked whether the ratio is likely to change for the following year. The Director of Financial Services explained that there are currently no plans to change the national scheme and confirmed that all Local Authorities are adopt the national scheme, with local discretions. Discussions centred on the impact of more people requiring CTRS support in the future

3. Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme

Members were content that the four week period of Council Tax Reduction was a reasonable period for those going back to work and were satisfied that the council continues to totally disregard the War Disablement Pensions/War Widows Pensions Income and with the discretion with regard to backdating.

4. Any Other Comments?

One member of the Committee queried whether other forums and groups should be identified and included in the consultation process. The Director of Financial Services confirmed that the process is refined each year and this year has seen the general budget consultation process opened up to more groups and forums and extended in duration as compared to last year. Another Member commented on the school councils which had been invited to join the consultation process.

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR, LEGAL & DEMOCRATIC SERVICES

36. EXCEPTION REPORT – COUNCIL PERFORMANCE REPORT – 30TH SEPTEMBER 2014 (QUARTER 2)

The Director, Financial Services 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 September 2014. Members were asked to consider key issues extracted from the main report that had been presented to Cabinet Performance Committee on the 20th November 2014.

The Vice Chairman queried how many flu jabs had been offered to Council staff and how much it cost to provide the vaccinations. The Director, Financial Services confirmed that flu jabs had been offered to all members of staff in order to address

the levels of sickness days lost to flu and the total cost of the flu vaccinations had been provided.

The Director of Highways and StreetCare Services was asked to explain the low number of fixed penalties issued for dog fouling and committee informed that work had been concentrated on the new policy for side waste collection, and that dog fouling was a difficult area to evidence as people will not provide the necessary information for action to be taken. The provision of bags for dog fouling was also addressed and Members informed that they were made available as a good will gesture to the residents of the County Borough. The Director also responded to a query in respect of food waste for commercial premises and whether the initiative had yet been rolled out across the Borough. The Director of Highways and StreetCare Services reported that this was not the case as yet; however, the costs of the initiative have now been reviewed with the project up and running, with all commercial businesses being included, by April 2015. The officer added that Trade Waste bags will also be incorporated following the review process and a subsequent report to Cabinet.

The Vice Chairman sought clarification as to why a meeting involving key partners was deferred in September 2014 to discuss collaborative arrangements for Sexual Violence & Domestic Abuse Forum. The Service Director Public Health & Protection explained that key partners were unavailable in the second quarter but the meeting had subsequently been held in the third quarter and a way forward was agreed.

Members queried the below average performance of the council with regards to collecting municipal waste prepared for reuse and/or recycled including source segregated bio wastes that are composted or treated biologically in another way, with the Quarter 2 performance at 76.19% compared to a target of 100%. The Director of Highways and StreetCare explained that they were currently out to tender for the residual waste processing and assured Members that the figure for October 2014 depicts a better picture showing the work undertaken in respect of side waste issues. The Officer outlined the process of collecting the waste for the benefit of Members. The issue of waste segregation was also addressed with Members being informed that the process would require higher numbers of vehicles and would be more resource intensive than figures outlined by Welsh Government.

The Service Director Public Health & Protection responded to the issue of More Card owners being able to reclaim the cost of parking from the Leisure Centre which was not considered cost effective. He confirmed that arrangements for the 'More' cards are currently under review and that this particular issue would be flagged up with the Head of Leisure Services.

One committee member queried the intentions of some of the companies involved in the Green Deal initiative which has been up and running in the area and who are

charging residents an assessment fee. The Service Director, Public Health & Protection outlined the idea behind the scheme for the benefit of committee and advised Members that residents can in some circumstances access the same energy efficiency tools free of charge. The Officer advised any residents to contact the Council's Housing Team for advice on who to approach for this type of work.

In relation to fly tipping incidents which lead to enforcement activity the Director of Highways and StreetCare dismissed the idea that the recent increase seen in the number of fly tipping incidents was related to the £10 charge. The Officer also defended the figures showing the quarter two performance being worse than the all Wales picture. He explained that Rhondda-Cynon-Taff use the PI 's correctly and if fly tipping is reported it is tackled immediately which can affect the outcome of the PI's.

A query was raised in respect of the Quarter 2 performance for food businesses which are broadly compliant with food law (89.93%) which is worse than the Wales average (90.33%). The Service Director, Public Health & Protection acknowledged the Rhondda- Cynon-Taff performance as having improved significantly and consistent with the Wales average. The Officer also addressed the performance in respect of the percentage of significant breaches that were rectified by intervention during the year for Animal Health with the Quarter 2 performance at 66.7% compared to a target of 75.00%. It was explained that significant breaches can in some cases take between 6months to a year to resolve and might not be concluded within the same year which will affect the PI outcome; however he did confirm that the picture is improving in the next quarter.

The Chairman thanked Officers for their responses to the many queries raised and the Committee **RESOLVED** to note the information contained within the report.

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

37. MEDIUM TERM SERVICE PLANNING PROGRESS REPORT

The Service Director Public Health & Protection outlined the background and purpose of the report for the benefit of Committee and referred to the list of service areas/service change proposals which have been considered to date (plus examples of those areas which will be considered in future as part of the review of all council services).

The report provided a summary of the service change proposals with a progress update on implementation. The Service Director Public Health & Protection outlined the position of some of the service change proposals such as those within Arts and Cultural Services, Leisure Services and Parks & Countryside.

The Director of Highways and StreetCare reported on the service change proposals regarding street cleansing, street lighting and public transport.

Following the report a number of questions were raised in respect of some of the issues such as how to overcome the staining of the newly laid pavements and floors in the town centres of Aberdare and Pontypridd. The Director of Highways and StreetCare partly attributed the problems to oil leaking from vehicles and gave assurances that the street cleansing team would continue to maintain a high standard of cleanliness under the pressures of diminishing budgets. Other issues such as charges for Wheelie Bins was also discussed.

Following consideration of the report it was **RESOLVED** to note the content of the progress report.

(**Note:** Having declared a personal and prejudicial interest County Borough Councillor S. Carter left the meeting for this item)

38. COMMUNITY RECYCLING CENTRES

With the aid of a PowerPoint presentation the Head of StreetCare & General Manager (Amgen) and the Strategy Operations Officer, Waste Services provided the Committee with an overview of the Community Recycling Centres throughout the County Borough.

Members of the Committee were provided with general information of the five community recycling centres located in the County Borough, their opening times, location and of their recycling rate. The Head of StreetCare provided a breakdown of the weekly tonnages by each community recycling centre and highlighted the sorts of materials received at each centre and the treatment they undergo in the recycling process. The officer explained that recently there have been a number of triggers in place to encourage residents to recycle and initiatives such as asking people to sort at the centres to discourage landfill.

The Strategy Operations Officer outlined the legislation and policy in place for the provision of community recycling centres and highlighted the importance of the Council website being updated regularly as it is relied upon by staff at the Council Call Centre and the One4All staff to advise residents. Members were informed that residents of the Council are encouraged to use CRC's wherever possible and highlighted the work in partnership with 'Too Good to Waste'.

The Strategy Operations Officer drew comparison in materials diverted from landfill between local authorities so that Members could understand the all Wales picture and concluded the presentation by discussing future developments such as the new community recycling centre in Llantrisant which it is anticipated will be completed in early 2015 and the new bid to Welsh Government for a CRC in Treherbert.

Members of the Committee praised the teams in the Community Recycling Centres for their hard work and following comments and questions the Committee **RESOLVED** to note the information within the presentation.

Councillor G. R. Davies
Chairman

Subject to approval as an accurate record at the next appropriate meeting of the Environmental Services Scrutiny Committee

The meeting closed at 6.40pm