

RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

**PUBLIC SERVICE DELIVERY, COMMUNITIES & PROSPERITY SCRUTINY
COMMITTEE**

Minutes of the meeting held at the Council Headquarters, The Pavilions, Clydach Vale on
Monday, 14th November 2016, 2015 at 5.00 p.m.

PRESENT

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

County Borough Councillors

(Mrs) J. Bonetto	G. Holmes
S. Bradwick	L. Langford
S. Carter	(Mrs) S. Pickering
(Mrs) A. Davies	T. Williams
J. Elliott	R. Yeo

Officers

Mr N. Wheeler – Director, Highways & Streetcare Services

Mr A. Griffiths – Head of Highways & Engineering

Mr P. Mee – Service Director Public Health & Protection

Mr D. James – Head of Communities & Prosperity

Ms N. Lewis – Communities First Co-ordinator

Mr Roger Waters – Service Director Highways & Streetcare

Mr A. Wilkins – Head of Legal – Corporate & Democratic Services

J. Nicholls – Senior Democratic Services Officer

Also in Attendance

County Borough Councillor C Willis - Scrutiny Performance Management

Co-ordinator

30. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from County Borough Councillors (Mrs) L. De Vet, P. Howe and M. Weaver.

31. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

32. ANNOUNCEMENT

Members of the Committee wished to pass on their best wishes to County Borough Councillor B. Morgan as his wife had been taken seriously ill.

33. MINUTES

RESOLVED – to approve as an accurate record the minutes of the meeting of the Public Service Delivery, Communities & Prosperity Scrutiny Committee held on the 3rd October 2016.

34. MATTERS ARISING

Minute No. 28 – The Vice Chairman referred to the presentation delivered by the Parks & Countryside Manager and the Service Manager at the previous meeting in respect of maintenance of grass areas within Rhondda Cynon Taf as having been very informative. He also praised the work of the Parks and Overgrowth teams in his area and throughout the County Borough. Committee members concurred with the Vice Chairman's comments.

Minute No. 26 – The Chairman raised a query in respect of the Council's Ethical Procurement Policy, adopted by Cabinet on the 22nd October 2015, and whether it covered staff holiday entitlement. The Head of Legal – Corporate & Democratic Services responded that all employers must comply with minimum statutory holiday entitlement requirements.

Minute No. 29 – The Chairman referred to the Viridor presentation which had been delivered at the previous meeting in advance of the Committee's visit to the waste plant in Cardiff. All Members of the Scrutiny Committee praised the staff at Viridor for their welcome and very insightful tour. The Vice Chairman suggested that all schools in RCT should undertake a tour and visit to Viridor the education centre.

35. PRESENTATION – DELIVERY OF HIGHWAYS/TRANSPORTATION INFRASTRUCTURE INVESTMENT PROGRAMME

The Committee received the Head of Highways & Engineering who provided an update in respect of the Highways/Transportation Infrastructure Investment Programme by means of a Power Point presentation.

Committee was informed that the Council's network represents the most significant asset of the Council valued at £3.4 billion which comprises of carriageways, footways, structures, retaining walls, street lighting, road gullies and drainage ditches. Further to the approval of the Council investment priorities, Mid Year Review, Supplementary Capital Programme for Highways, Transportation & Strategic Projects in November 2015 Members were reminded of the capital programme for highways to date.

Members were informed of the Investment Plan priorities across the County Borough such as town/village centre improvements in Mountain Ash, Porth, Pontypridd and Abercynon to enhance the street furniture. The Head of Highways & Engineering added that since 2011, 760 roads and 250 footways have been improved and he provided further details in respect of progress for the planned work and that completed during the first year of the three year capital programme.

It was reported that the total expenditure of £53m that has been invested since 2011 has been increased to over £76m – making this scheme one of the largest in Wales and further showing the Council's commitment to investing in the infrastructure within the County Borough. The Head of Highways & Engineering explained that the improvements to the highways infrastructure network will improve and protect the highways network, reduce congestion and improve road safety.

A number of particular projects were referred to such as the work undertaken in Fiddlers Elbow to replace the movement joints at one of the region's busiest bridges for the long term safety of motorists in conjunction with Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council. Members were informed that due to the regular updates and effective communication provided to members of the public there have been few complaints. It was emphasised that communication is essential to deliver all the highways projects together with a more improved level of control and monitoring of work via a monthly Project Board which issues regular progress reports and updates. As a result of the works undertaken there has been a percentage change in the condition of carriageways and an overall drop in the percentage of roads requiring attention in addition to a downward trend in the numbers of highways insurance claims.

The Head of Highways & Engineering concluded his presentation and showed two clips from Youtube, one in respect of the improvements on the Rhigos Road and the other the Porth Park and Ride.

Members of the Public Service Delivery, Communities & Prosperity Scrutiny Committee posed a number of questions including a request for an update in respect of the cycle path in the Rhondda Fawr to which the Service Director, Highways and Streetcare confirmed that it would be subject to Welsh Government funding and added that feasibility work is currently being undertaken to identify those priority areas. The highways improvements in Brynteg were praised by a member of the Committee and an update was also requested in respect of Maerdy Mountain and information relating to street LED lighting. Members were informed that the LED lighting is suited to outdoor applications as it reduces light pollution in addition to providing more clarity and definition to the areas in which they are positioned.

Following discussion it was **RESOLVED** to acknowledge the update provided in respect of the delivery of the highways/transportation infrastructure investment programme.

36. IMPLEMENTATION OF THE TACKLING POVERTY REVIEW RECOMMENDATIONS – PROGRESS REPORT

The Head of Communities and Prosperity presented the progress report of the Group Director, Community & Children's Services in respect of the implementation of the Tackling Poverty Review Recommendations in conjunction with a Power Point presentation.

Members were provided with background to the review which had been undertaken during 2015 and focussed primarily on Communities First, Families First and Flying Start programmes. Overall the review had recognised good areas across all three programmes but the key message to have emerged from the review included a need to improve the coordination of approach across all levels. In response to the review, Cabinet approved the creation of one Tackling Poverty service with an immediate restructuring of Communities First programme with a view to bringing the remaining 'Tackling Poverty' programmes together under one service in a stepped approach.

The Head of Communities and Prosperity reported that following areas were identified as requiring attention and the headings were explored in more detail:-

- **Strategic direction and governance arrangements**
 - It was reported that a single RCT wide governance forum will coordinate an overarching approach
 - A single tackling poverty outcomes framework to support the outcome focused approach
 - A single Communities First Strategy
- **Programme Infrastructure**
 - A new Communities and Prosperity service that will support the Council's tackling poverty approach via a single commissioning team and a new service delivery model which is made up of three key elements,
- **Effective systems of monitoring and review**
 - New performance and contracting monitoring framework
 - Single management information system
 - Single commissioning team

Committee was also provided with a list of outcomes from Communities First up to the end of October 2016 which demonstrated the good work in progress by the service which is in line with the Welsh Government Tackling Poverty alignment project. In conclusion the Head of Communities and Prosperity stated that the potential for a coordinated approach at strategic level and on the ground is being implemented and realised.

In response to questioning, the Head of Communities and Prosperity reported that work is currently being undertaken with the Supporting People Programme to address homelessness. Recently discussions were held with the Chief Executives of the Housing Associations around supporting people to maintain their tenancies through the promotion of provision. A Member asked for further information in relation to the Flying Start pilot scheme which will potentially offer 30 hours of free childcare to working parents for 48 weeks of the year. In response Members were informed that it will be tested in some local authority areas from the autumn of 2017 to make sure it works for parents and childcare providers, followed by wider roll-out. Members suggested that the new local engagement forums needed to provide the deprived families within our communities with the most appropriate support.

The Service Director Public Health and Protection provided Committee his response to the Cabinet Secretary for Children and Communities statement which had been delivered on the 11th October 2016 in respect of Communities First. In his statement the Minister indicated that he is 'minded to phase out the Communities First programme while establishing a new approach to meet the challenges of the future.' The Service Director commented that the services within Rhondda Cynon Taf have been transformed and are now starting to improve the coordination across

programmes; however he recognised the risks to the work in place for the Council's most vulnerable residents in light of the recent statement. Members were informed that the programme will continue until at least December 2017 with funding potentially being reduced from April 2017 which could impact upon staff, the voluntary sector and delivery of the programme. In conclusion the Service Director Public Health and Protection assured Members that further dialogue with Welsh Government would take place as well as with the PSB to establish a way forward and that any further updates would be relayed to Committee.

RESOLVED to:-

1. Receive and acknowledge the work undertaken to date in response to the tackling poverty review recommendations and to;
2. Receive an update in respect of a further Ministerial Statement in the New Year in respect of Communities First.

37. QUARTERLY UPDATE IN RESPECT OF RECYCLING

The Director of Highways and Streetcare Services presented his quarterly report in respect of recycling data and targets, by means of Power Point presentation, which had previously been requested by Members of the Public Service Delivery, Communities and Prosperity Scrutiny Committee.

Committee was reminded of the Welsh Government recycling target of 70% by 2024-2025 and of the data relating specifically to Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council which demonstrated that currently RCT is achieving and exceeding the nationally set target of 58% with 66.35%, which is only 4% short of the target for 2024/25. It was reported that the Community Recycling Centres within RCT greatly contribute to the overall municipal recycling figures and reached a target of 88.51% for 2016/17.

The Director of Highways and Streetcare Services emphasised that the three following steps would contribute to the Council achieving a 70% recycling target:-

Awareness campaigns –It was reported that the next campaign would be more of a thank you to those residents who regularly recycle whilst encouraging them to do more and for others to start recycling.

Change Legislative Powers – There is a continued push on Welsh Government to change legislation thus making it incumbent on everyone to recycle but currently Local Authorities have no powers to force residents to recycle or to prosecute them for not.

Bag drop to all properties – During the first week in December 2016 clear recycling bags will be delivered to every household throughout the County Borough with a view to encourage more residents to recycle.

An update was provided in relation to the mattress recycling plant in Bryn Pica. Through the Small Business Research Initiative (SBRI) fund it will be possible to engage with private business sector to seek an innovative solution to the recycling of all mattress material.

The Director of Highways and Streetcare Services responded to a number of questions from members of the Committee in respect of what can and cannot be recycled, referred to as the 'grey areas'. Members were advised that as long as the material is not contaminated with food waste it should be recycled.

Following discussion it was **RESOLVED** to:-

1. Acknowledge the update in respect of the recycling data for RCT and;
2. Receive a further update at the meeting of the Public Service Delivery, Communities & Prosperity Scrutiny Committee to be held on the 13th February 2017.

38. UPDATED WORK PROGRAMME

The Head of Legal – Corporate & Democratic Services presented Members of the Public Service Delivery, Communities and Prosperity Scrutiny Committee with the updated work programme for the 2016/17 Municipal Year.

Members were advised that following the Committee's invitation the Chief Executive Officer and Director of Homes and Communities from Trivallis (formerly RCT Homes) would be in attendance at the next meeting to discuss whether Trivallis is engaged with the current Council recycling initiatives. The next meeting is to be held on the 12th December 2016. Members of the Committee agreed that relevant topics for discussion should be raised with Trivallis at the December meeting rather than in advance.

RESOLVED to note the updated work programme of the Public Service Delivery, Communities and Prosperity Scrutiny Committee.

Chairman

G. R. Davies

The meeting closed at 6.20pm