



RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of the Public Service Delivery, Communities and Prosperity Scrutiny Committee meeting held on Thursday, 12 November 2020 at 5.00 pm at the Virtual.

County Borough Councillors - Public Service Delivery, Communities and Prosperity Scrutiny Committee Members in attendance:-

Cllr S Bradwick – Chairman, Cllr T Williams – Vice Chair, Cllr M Weaver, Cllr G Stacey, Cllr W Treeby, Cllr A Chapman, Cllr D Owen-Jones, Cllr D Grehan, Cllr M Diamond, Cllr E George, Cllr S Pickering, Cllr A Fox, Cllr G Holmes

Officers in attendance

Mr Steve Owen – Service Director
Mr Simon Humphreys – Head of Legal Services
Mrs Sarah Daniel – Senior Democratic Services Officer

6 Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr W Owens and Cllr A Crimmings

7 Declaration of Interest

In accordance with the Council's Code of Conduct, there were no declarations made pertaining to the agenda.

8 Minutes

It was **RESOLVED** to approve the minutes of the 23rd September 2020 as an accurate reflection of the meeting.

9 Forward Work Programme

The Senior Democratic Services Officer presented the report to members and provided members the opportunity to comment on the draft Forward Work Programme and put forward any items for discussion at future meetings. She reminded members that the Forward Work Programme would remain flexible and could be reviewed by members at regular intervals. She added that consideration would also be given to officers priorities whilst continuing to work through the current global pandemic.

A member asked if consideration to an item on Flytipping could be included on the Forward Work Programme. The Senior Democratic Services Officer stated that this would be considered under the Enforcement item due in March 2021

A member stated that he had some ideas for the Forward Work programme and would discuss with the Chairman and forward to the Senior Democratic Services officer in due course.

REOSLVED: Members noted the recommendations in 2.1-2.3 of the report.

10 Impact of Covid 19 on Recycling and Residual Waste in RCT

The Service Director Streetcare introduced the report to members on the recycling performance for the first 6 months of 2020/2 during the COVID 19 period. He advised members that the target for recycling was set at 64% by Welsh Government and that failure to achieve these targets could result in substantial fines. He added that they were currently working towards the future targets and were performing extremely well and were well on track to achieve the targets ahead of time as long as they continue to push hard, even under the current circumstances.

The Chairman asked how COVID19 had impacted on the Streetcare teams in terms of staff being off sick or self-isolating and also how the team coped with staff being redeployed to other business critical service areas. He also asked about the cleaning regime of the vehicles between uses to reduce the spread of infection.

The Service Director advised that during the initial stages of lockdown it was a challenge as there were large number of staff that were shielding and the service also had to collapse other services that were deemed non-essential at the time. He advised that the recycling centres were closed for an initial period during the lockdown with the staff redeployed to these other services. He added that green waste was also suspended. Street cleansing operatives were transferred to waste teams to assist with collections when required.

The Service Director advised that collections returned to normal in June. Grass cutting was suspended for the first month which was also a challenge for the service area. He advised members that enforcement teams were used predominately to distribute recycling bags and enhanced cleaning of schools. In response to how the teams were cleansing the vehicles he advised that due to social distancing restrictions staff were reduced to two per cab so another support vehicle had to follow to transport the other crew member provide support. The support vehicles were sought from other services or hired in through Fleet services. The driver of the vehicle was responsible for sanitising the vehicle throughout the day using an antiviral spray. A dedicated person at each of the depots would ensure all work areas were and continue to be sanitised. Other rules enforced were staff wearing masks, social distancing and if anyone displayed symptoms they were to remain home and follow government guidance on testing, isolating, etc.

A member stated that all the officers achieved excellent work during the pandemic, and all went over and above and all the teams should be commended.

A member referred to the figure achieved of 68.3% of recycling and asked how much down this was from last year. The Service Director state that this was down just over 0.56% on last year

A member asked about the grass cutting schedule and the costs associated with the cutting.

The Service Director stated that the grass cutting schedule starts at the end of March, however, this year it was delayed until the end of May. He advised that within his service area sat highways, cemeteries, playgrounds and sports pitches and the cutting resumed at various stages based on priorities. The costs associated with cutting were approximately £600k per annum. He added that the regime worked far better where the team utilise more experienced staff and

employ agency grass cutters to accompany them. This way of working had reduced resources and had been more effective and efficient with permanent teams managing agency staff. In response to a question he advised that the service area employs around 50 staff but this varies depending on the time of year.

A member stated that he had been approached by residents to say they can't access recycling bags as they had not been distributed in the usual places. He asked if there was high demand as many of his residents had resorted to putting recycling in residual waste bags and was concerned this would impact on targets

The Service Director stated that this area had been impacted by the current pandemic. Some usual distribution points had been closed during the pandemic and so other distribution points were being used more than usual. He added that residents were able to order more recycling bags online, however the surge in demand for this had increased during lockdown periods so the service area were struggling to cope with demand. He added that it was also difficult to manage people taking more than what they needed and also misusing the bags. He advised the Committee that they had considered a mass distribution but then there was a concern that many of these would be wasted as not everyone needed more supplies. He advised that if the bags were ordered online that the delivery should be made within the fortnight. He reassured members that this team were striving to improve in this area and they were constantly looking at ways they could improve their performance and make the service more efficient.

A member asked about staff at Bryn Pica and if staff were still employed as pickers at the site as they were at previous sites

The Service Director Streetcare stated that the previous plant was predominately hand sorted, but still had some automated processes such as magnets, he advised that the normal shift had around 30 hand pickers and was a very outdated plant which is why investment was made for the state of the art plant which has digital sorting processes and cameras to sort items. He added that there were approximately 15 members of staff still needed for certain parts of the process but it was more efficient now with one shift per day than the two shifts previously. He advised members that the product needed to be a high standard of quality with minimal contamination to achieve a better rate for the product.

A member asked when the public request a delivery of recycling bag online, who delivers them? The Service Director stated that there are dedicated staff members who deliver these but in recent month's enforcement staff have had to be called upon to support due to high demand. He added that usually collection crews carry little stock on the vehicles for any ad-hoc requests they receive.

A member asked if the products that are taken to CRC's are included in the overall recycling figures for WG targets? The Service Director Streetcare stated that the figures included all of the waste from the CRC including plastic, wood, metal and waste from the compactor skips.

A Member paid tribute to the Streetcare team and stated they had been superb during the lockdown with collections on consistently on time in his area. He asked if the agency staff used for the annual grass cutting were redeployed to another team during the lockdown period. The Service Director stated they were not employed until the commencement of grass cutting

A member sought clarification around the contamination of recycling products

and asked what determined a product to be contaminated?

The Service Director Streetcare stated that he was referring to items such as food or nappies that were put in with recycling or items that had not been cleaned and emptied first; or where products were put in the wrong recycling bags. He added that there was an A to Z guide online that residents could download to ensure when they dispose of recycling they do so properly.

A member stated that he was concerned about Welsh Government raising the targets for recycling. He asked how we could target those who do not recycle at all and encourage them to contribute so the Authority can hit the targets and ultimately not face substantial fines. The Service Director stated that the Authority focuses their attention on the people who do recycle, who could do more. He added that they could spend a lot of time and effort targeting a small minority who are not interested in recycling but it is better use of resources to target those who do care about the environment and who do want to do more. That being said, he added that the Authority has started to issue penalties to residents who do not recycle or put more than their allocation of residual waste out. Wales overall are excellent at recycling and Welsh Government are only increasing the targets as they feel it is achievable and there is more scope to improve.

A member was concerned about residents who do not have access to the internet and how they could request more recycling bags. The Service Director advised that in addition to requesting the bags online residents could access more bags at over 160 distribution points throughout the Local Authority area. He recommended that where possible family members and neighbours support those residents who were unable to access online services. He advised that the way in which the bags were distributed now and in the future is subject to ongoing review.

A member queried the upper level behind Llantrisant recycling centre and what they do at the centre. The Service Director responded that this was a contractor that recycles for the authority and also has his own business, drying out wood mainly.

A Member asked if the Authority were able to publically share through social media platforms when the Authority has issued enforcement penalties to raise awareness that the Authority is issuing fines and so this could act as a deterrent to potential offenders. The Service Director responded that they do raise awareness with the press team when such cases arose but they had to be careful with the information that was shared to protect identities.

Update in 6 months.

11 Chair's Review and Close

The Chair thanked the Service Director in attendance and asked that the Committees thanks are sent to all of the teams involved for their continued hard work and commitment during the lockdown period and beyond.

He asked that the Committee receive an update on the service area in 6 months' time.

12 Urgent Business

None

**Cllr S Bradwick
Chairman**