

ENVIRONMENTAL & PUBLIC PROTECTION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

17TH NOVEMBER 2017

PRESENT: Councillor J.D. James (Chair)

Councillors:

A. Davies, J.A. Davies, P.M. Edwards, A.L. Fox, S.J.G. Gilasbey, T.M. Higgins,
A. James, T.A.J. Davies, A. Vaughan Owen, B.D.J. Phillips and J.S. Phillips.

Councillor K.V. Broom – Substitute for Councillor D.T. Thomas;
Councillor W.T. Evans – Substitute for Councillor A.D.T. Speake.

Also in attendance:

Councillor H.A.L. Evans, Executive Board Member for Environment;
Councillor P.M. Hughes, Executive Board Member for Public Protection.

The following Officers were in attendance:

R. Staines, Head of Housing and Public Protection
S. Pilliner, Head of Transportation & Highways
A. Williams, Head of Waste and Environmental Services
S.E. Watts, Environmental Protection Manager
D. King, Highway Services Manager
K. Thomas, Community Safety Manager
R. Waters, Highways and Transportation Services Manager
R. James, Group Accountant
J. Owen, Democratic Services Officer

Chamber, County Hall, Carmarthen – 10:00am - 11:20am

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

The Chair welcomed Mr Gareth Lewis, Wales Audit Office to the meeting and informed the Committee that Mr Lewis was in attendance as an observer.

The Chair also welcomed Mr Richard Waters to the meeting and congratulated him on being appointed Highways and Transportation Services Manager.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors A.D.T. Speake and D. Thomas.

2. DECLARATIONS OF PERSONAL INTEREST

Councillor	Minute Item(s)	Nature of Interest
K.V. Broom	5 – Environmental Health and Licensing Services Annual Report 2016/17; 8 – Environmental and Public Protection Task and Finish Group 2017/18 – Planning and Scoping Document	Her husband works for National Resources Wales
A. James	8 – Environmental and Public Protection Task and Finish Group 2017/18 – Planning and Scoping Document	Owens land in which a public footpath crosses
K.V. Broom	8 – Environmental and Public Protection Task and Finish Group 2017/18 – Planning and Scoping Document	Owens land in which a public footpath crosses
B.D.J.Phillips	8 – Environmental and Public Protection Task and Finish Group 2017/18 – Planning and Scoping Document	Owens land in which a public footpath crosses
J.A. Davies	8 – Environmental and Public Protection Task and Finish Group 2017/18 – Planning and Scoping Document	Owens land in which a public footpath crosses

3. DECLARATIONS OF PROHIBITED PARTY WHIPS

There were no declarations of prohibited party whips.

4. PUBLIC QUESTIONS (NONE RECEIVED)

The Chair advised that no public questions had been received.

5. ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH AND LICENSING SERVICES ANNUAL REPORT 2016/17

The Committee considered an annual report outlining the roles and responsibilities of the Environmental Health and Licensing Service. The service encompassed food safety, communicable disease, health and safety, licensing, pollution (including air, land and noise), nuisances (including noise, odour, smoke etc), pest control advice and dog warden services. The work was predominantly statutory and illustrated the demands on the service and the challenges faced in 2016/17.

The following issues were discussed during consideration of the report:

It was asked if any funding was being received from WG in order to cover the costs of the additional responsibilities placed on the Council. The Environmental Protection Manager informed the Committee that the Council was not receiving any funding, however, teams were managing by reviewing and changing the way they work in order to provide meet expectations.

A query was raised as to why 2016/17 experienced a high volume of campylobacter cases and what was being done to reduce the number of cases in the future. The Head of Housing and Public Protection explained that number of cases in 2016/17 had reduced from peak number in 2014/15 and that this may have been as a result of campaigns to raise public awareness to report illnesses and that as the campaigns reduced, the numbers reported remained constant. The Head of Housing and Public Protection informed the Committee of the proactive work that would be undertaken in order to prevent cases of campylobacter. This would be done by working with the press and media team to educate the public in the safe storage of raw meat and particularly in the lead up to Christmas the safe storage and cooking of turkey. Furthermore, the Committee was informed that there were two teams working within food safety, one located in Trading Standards and the other in Environmental Health and that both teams have a considerable impact on protecting the public.

It was asked how robust the data collection of the infectious diseases was. The Environmental Protection Manager stated that the national information was supplied by Public Health Wales which would be scrutinised by the team to identify any trends and determine if there were any common links that would require further questioning.

In response to a query regarding the current position of shellfish sampling, the Environmental Protection Manager informed the Committee that during 2016/17, officers were requested to increase the sampling/monitoring regime in Three Rivers. This was as a result of Welsh Government proposing to open the beds for commercial gathering. However, as the section were not recompensed for the increase in activity the numbers and frequency of sampling was reduced from the original request through knowledge, experience and negotiation by officers to ensure that there was a reasonable, representative programme. Furthermore, Members were informed that since the Welsh Governments proposal it was decided not to open the beds for commercial shellfish gathering.

With regard to a query raised on the seriousness of illegal gathering of shellfish, the Environmental Protection Manager explained that policing the issue was difficult due to the geographical challenges and that the whilst a co-ordinated approach was being taken the work of various agencies continued to be hampered by the issue of continuity of evidence.

In reference to the pollution provided on page 18 of the report, a suggestion was made that it would be beneficial to the Councillors and the public if a list of environmental permit holders were made available on the Council website. The Environmental Protection Manager agreed that this would be beneficial and would seek to publish a list onto the Council website.

In light of the vision to increase community involvement, a query was raised as to how the Council was involving communities with regards to emergency planning. The Head of Waste and Environmental Services stated that he was unable to provide the Committee with any specific information on this matter today, however, he would liaise with the Civil Contingency Manager and inform Members accordingly.

Reference was made to the table containing the top 20 categories of Service Requests – Pollution set out on page 15 of the report. A concern was raised in relation to the high number within the ‘accumulation of refuse’ category and if this was an early indication of the impact of closing recycling centres. The Head of Waste and Environmental Services informed the Committee that this figure was largely to do with hoarding on private properties.

Furthermore, reassurance was provided that currently there were no issues arising from the closure of the Llangadog recycling centre, however this was being closely monitored.

The Head of Housing and Public Protection further added that it would be beneficial to provide the Committee with additional comparative data and trending information.

A concern was raised regarding the recent decision made by Executive Board held on 23rd October 2017 (Minute 13 refers) to cease the current bathing water monitoring programme which included the Burry Inlet location. The Head of Housing and Public Protection provided an explanation which informed the decision and stated that whilst the Authority had a responsibility to safeguard public health, bathing water sampling was not a statutory function. Furthermore, with regard to the Burry Inlet, due to the fact that high tides, periods of heavy rainfall and possible agriculture pollutants the water quality deteriorates in the Burry Inlet. Therefore, in order to protect public safety and health, it was decided to signpost the public to the approved bathing beaches in Pembrey and Pendine which are both sampled and have appropriate facilities.

Reference was made to page 17 of the report which contained a table providing the number of Dog Warden Enquiries. A comment was raised on the reducing trend of enquiries since 2013/14 where it was felt that the trend in enquiries should be increasing not decreasing. The Environmental Protection Manager stated that this figure related to stray dogs only and that the increased use of social media by the public to locate owners of stray dogs was proving very powerful which by-passes the need for dog warden intervention. Furthermore, microchipping in dogs, providing the chip was current and up to date was also successful.

The Head of Waste and Environmental Services added that the Public Space Protection Order (PSPO) was in place and that currently there were 4 teams of Enforcement Officers County wide who work closely with the police in the event of attacks involving dogs. Following an example provided by a Committee Member where a dog warden was required out of hours, it was asked what the current provision was for providing an out of hours dog warden service. The Environmental Protection Manager stated that currently there was no provision for a 24hour dog warden service due to the limited staffing capacity.

In response to a query raised regarding the location of scrap dealers within Carmarthenshire, the Environmental Protection Manager stated that she did not have the information available to hand but would provide the requested information to Councillors following the meeting.

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that the report be noted.

6. HIGHWAYS NETWORK HIERARCHY

The Committee considered a report which provided an update on the proposed implementation of a functional hierarchy for highways infrastructure investment. The hierarchy would support an overall Highway Asset Management Plan that prioritises highway infrastructure investment through a risk based approach in accordance with the new updated National Codes of Practice – “Well Managed Highway Infrastructure.”

The Committee noted that the highway network contained over 3,500 kilometres of carriageway which facilitated the safe movement of goods and people. With a reducing resource base and an increase in traffic, prioritising where resources are spent was important to assist the authority to minimise risk, meet its statutory obligations and use a reducing resource base effectively.

The report proposed to define a network hierarchy based on the function of the carriageway/section of carriageway as set out in table 1 of the report.

The report outlined that the introduction of a highways network hierarchy would underpin and improve the management, prioritisation and service levels for highway maintenance and infrastructure investment and would support the Council’s Key outcomes from the Corporate Strategy 2015 /2020. In addition, the report identified that the network hierarchy would contribute towards the seven national goals of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 by developing new ways of working.

The following issues were discussed during consideration of the report:

It was commented, that Carmarthenshire had the 2nd largest amount of kilometres of highway in Wales and in response to a query raised, the Head of Highways and Transportation confirmed that whilst the revenue settlement paid due consideration to the size of the network within the County, the revenue settlement had been reduced significantly over a number of years.

Following a query on how the safety of roads in rural areas were prioritised, the Head of Highways and Transportation stated that as there was a finite budget the maintenance of rural roads was prioritised to ensure the highway was maintained in a safe condition..

It was asked if the Public Rights of Way budget formed part of the same budget as highways. The Head of Highways and Transportation clarified that the budget for the Public Rights of Way was separate from highways. Furthermore, a review was currently underway with regard to Public Rights of Way where a similar prioritisation model in regard to maintenance and grant funding was being considered.

A query was raised in relation to the additional wear and tear of rural roads and bridges caused by forestry haulage vehicles. The Highway Services Manager explained to the Committee and that a 3 year Memorandum of Understanding had recently been agreed and signed with the Forestry Commission and other local authorities to promote haulage routes in some forests which would minimise the impact of forestry haulage vehicles on minor local roads.

With regard to the Well Being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and the 5 ways of working, it was asked if the impact on climate change was considered as particularly when laying tarmac. The Head of Highways and Transportation confirmed that climate change was taken into consideration with regard to work on planning highways and winter maintenance. The Highway Services Manager explained to the Committee that tarmac had a life expectancy of around 20 years and that a heavy surface dressing programme was in place and that data from a number of driven computerised surveys would dictate a maintenance regime.

In relation to working collaboratively, it was asked how much work was undertaken with utility companies and was there any scope for improving integration. The Highway Services Manager informed the Committee that regular meetings currently took place with utility companies and that a forward work plan was shared to improve co-ordination.

It was asked if the Highways Network Hierarchy could include the protection of green lanes/tracks. The Head of Highways and Transportation acknowledged there were challenges with regard to green lanes especially given the reduction in available resources, but would provide feedback to the Principal Engineer (Network and Asset Management).

RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND TO THE EXECUTIVE BOARD that subject to the consideration of its comments the Highways Network Hierarchy report be approved.

7. REVENUE & CAPITAL BUDGET MONITORING REPORT 2017/18

The Committee considered the Revenue and Capital Budget Monitoring Report as at 31st August 2017 in relation to the 2017/18 financial year. The report provided members with budget monitoring information for the Environment Service, Public Protection Service and the Community Safety Service and considered the budgetary position. In summary, the revenue budget for the services within the Environment and Public Protection Scrutiny remit were forecasting a £127k overspend. Whereas, the main variances on capital schemes showed a forecasted net spend of £10,733k compared with a working net budget of £10,901k giving a £-168k variance.

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that the report be received.

8. ENVIRONMENTAL & PUBLIC PROTECTION TASK & FINISH GROUP 2017/18 PLANNING AND SCOPING DOCUMENT

The Chair reminded the Committee that to date, Committee Members had considered a number of suggestions and agreed the project subject for the Task and Finish Group - "to review of the maintenance provision of highway hedges and verges". On behalf of the Chair, the Democratic Services Officer presented the planning and scoping document which included the aims and scope of the project.

The Committee noted that in the development of the Scoping document it had been established that by including the maintenance of cycle and footpaths would make the scope of the project too broad. Furthermore, the Environment Directorate were currently undertaking a piece of work that included the maintenance of cycle and footpaths which would be reported to the Committee in due course. The Democratic Services Officer further advised that the Committee could formulate an additional Task and Finish group to consider the maintenance of cycle and footpaths at a later date should they wish to do so.

The Committee also noted the timescale for completion which included four Task and Finish Group scheduled meetings with a view to present a final report to the Committee in May 2018.

In order to form a politically balanced Task and Finish Group, the Chair sought up to 6 nominations from the Committee.

It was therefore

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED:-

- 8.1 that the Task and Finish Scoping Document be received;**
- 8.2 to endorse the project aims and scope of the Task and Finish Group;**
- 8.3 that the membership of the Task and Finish Group be as follows:-**
 - **Councillor Alun Davies**
 - **Councillor Jeanette Gilasbey**
 - **Councillor Dorian Philips**
 - **Councillor Penny Edwards**
 - **Councillor John James**
 - **Councillor Andrew James**

9. EXPLANATION FOR NON-SUBMISSION OF SCRUTINY REPORT

The Committee noted the non-submission of the Fair and Safe Communities Annual Report 2016/17 and the Half Year Compliments and Complaints Report 2017.

Resolved that the non-submission of scrutiny reports be noted.

10. FORTHCOMING ITEMS

The Committee considered the list of forthcoming items for the meeting scheduled to take place on the 11th December 2017 and was afforded the opportunity to request for information to be placed in to the reports.

Reference was made to the last meeting of the Environment and Public Protection Committee held on 2nd October 2017 and in response to the information which was provided to Councillors in respect of the queries raised in Minute 7 and 9 respectively. It was requested that a more detailed report on the Council's Energy Consumption to be brought before Committee in January 2018 for their consideration.

Members noted the appended revised Environmental and Public Protection Scrutiny Committee Forward Work Plan and the Executive Board Forward Work Plan.

RESOLVED that:

- 10.1 the list of forthcoming items be received;**
- 10.2 the revised Environmental and Public Protection Forward Work Plan be noted;**
- 10.3 the Executive Board Forward Work Plan be noted;**
- 10.4 a report on the Council's energy consumption to be brought to the Committee in January 2018 for consideration.**

11. TO SIGN AS A CORRECT RECORD THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE COMMITTEE HELD ON THE 2ND OCTOBER 2017

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Environment and Public Protection Scrutiny Committee held on the 2nd October, 2017 be signed as a correct record.

CHAIR

DATE