

ENVIRONMENTAL & PUBLIC PROTECTION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Friday, 11 November 2016

PRESENT: Councillor A.P. Cooper (Chair)

Councillors:

S.M. Allen, D.E. Williams, A. Davies, D.B. Davies, J.A. Davies, P.M. Edwards, D.C. Evans, I.J. Jackson, J.P. Jenkins, A.D.T. Speake and S.E. Thomas

Also in attendance:

Councillor D. Jenkins – Deputy Leader and Executive Board Member for Resources;
Councillor P.A. Palmer – Deputy Leader and Executive Board Member for Communities;
Councillor H.A.L. Evans – Executive Board Member for Technical Services;
Councillor M. Stephens – Executive Board Member for Human Resources, Efficiencies and Collaboration

The following Officers were in attendance:

Mr. S. Pilliner, Head of Transportation & Highways
Mr. R. Edmunds, Trading Standards Services Manager
Ms. J. Edwards, Business Improvement Manager
Mr. A. Maynard, Communities and Safeguarding Manager
Mr. J. Owen, TIC Programme Manager
Mrs. S. Watts, Environmental Health and Licensing Manager
Ms. R. James, Group Accountant
Mr. M. Hughes, Democratic Services Officer
Mrs. J. Owen, Democratic Services Officer

Chamber, 3 Spilman Street, Carmarthen - 10.00 am - 1.00 pm

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors, W.G. Thomas, W.J. Lemon and T.J. Jones [Executive Board Member – Environmental and Public Protection].

2. DECLARATIONS OF PERSONAL INTEREST

There were no declarations of personal interest.

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. FORTHCOMING ITEMS

In response to a query regarding the Forthcoming Items for December meeting being solely budget related, the Democratic Services Officer reminded the Committee that traditionally, the December meetings were reserved for scrutinising the forthcoming year's budget proposals.

Reference was made to the recent incident involving the spillage of Kerosene Oil at Nantycaws, near Carmarthen. The Head of Transportation & Highways informed the Committee that the Emergency incident was now moving to recovery stage with formal handover from Dyfed Powys Police to the Local Recovery Group (LRG). The LRG would be chaired by the Director for Environment. The Committee requested that an update be provided at the next meeting.

Following a query regarding the Committee's request for a seminar on Corporate Manslaughter, the Executive Board Member for Human Resources, Efficiencies and Collaboration confirmed that the Executive Board had received a presentation on corporate manslaughter but had decided that with a new cohort of elected members expected after the elections in May, it would be more appropriate for such a seminar to be arranged at that time.

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that the list of forthcoming items be received subject to the inclusion of an update on the oil spill incident at Nantycaws.

6. TRANSFORM, INNOVATE & CHANGE (TIC) - PROGRAMME UPDATE

The Committee received an update on the 'Transform, Innovate and Change' (TIC) programme. Members noted that the initiative, established in 2012, was launched in response to the significant financial challenges being faced by the Local Authority and that to date, the TIC approach had assisted in identifying, or was helping to deliver, approximately £7m of efficiency savings. The Committee also received an overview of the TIC Fleet Management Review which was shown to be generating significant savings through more effective and efficient utilisation of the Council's fleet of vehicles and reductions in the spend associated with staff travel through adopting smarter ways of working

The following issues were discussed during consideration of the update:

Following a query, the Head of Transportation & Highways reassured committee members that officers were confident in meeting planned savings. In terms of the TIC process, it was vital that engagement with staff was undertaken in order to ensure that new solutions were achieved. In response to a further query on the overspend in the passenger transport service, he informed the Committee that discussions with Financial Services were on-going to resolve this matter.

Reference was made to previous proposals to develop a centralised depot for highways services. The Head of Transportation & Highways confirmed that this was still being considered as part of the agile working agenda and that a departmental team had been established to look at different options and the requirements of the service, although no firm plans were currently in place.

It was asked whether the computer model used for planning refuse collection routes could be utilised for School Transport routes, in order to ascertain further efficiencies and whether the Transportation & Highways service was consulted on the location of new schools and care homes. The Head of Transportation & Highways confirmed that the service was consulted as part of any major development, especially for schools through the Modernising Education Programme. The location of Ysgol Bro Dinefwr for instance at been influenced by the transportation needs of pupils. In relation to school transport routes, officers ensured that the demand was managed in the first instance before deciding on the appropriate routes. A recent review of School Transport had found that the routes were operating at 95% efficiency. However, taxi arrangements for school pupils was a key area that is currently subject to a TIC review.

In response to a query on previous reductions in staffing, the Head of Transportation & Highways stated that no compulsory redundancies were made as a result of the process and that staff efficiencies were made through natural wastage and severance schemes. It was added that the TIC team were continuously looking at different ways in working in order to avoid frontline cuts of which the fleet review was a good example, where supply costs had been reduced in order to protect frontline services.

It was asked if there were any cheaper pool cars available on the market compared to those currently used by the Authority. The Head of Transportation & Highways informed the Committee that due to the remote areas in which some of the car fleet operated, 4x4 vehicles were a necessity, especially during the winter months and that following the last procurement exercise, the Volkswagen Tiguan had emerged as the most efficient and offering the best value for money. However, he added that following a recent procurement exercise, these would now be replaced by the Skoda Yeti as this had offered the best value for money.

The Committee's meeting was briefly adjourned in order to observe a minute's silence, held to mark the Armistice Day commemorations.

It was asked whether the use of agency workers was being considered as historically, such workers had been used by the Environment Department. The Head of Transportation & Engineering informed the Committee that this was outside the scope of the TIC fleet review.

Further to a suggestion that the use of agency staff across the Authority's departments be reviewed by the TIC Team, the TIC Programme Manager agreed to consider the suggestion.

In response to a question about the staffing of the TIC Team, the TIC Programme Manager reminded the Committee that there were a number of individual officers out in departments who were contributing to the overall work of the TIC Team. An invest to save proposal for a TIC Schools Officer was also being considered at present and it was envisaged that this individual would work with schools to highlight savings and efficiencies.

The Committee welcomed the work being undertaken by officers through the TIC programme and the significant efficiencies that had been made to date and **UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that the report be received.**

7. UPDATE ON UK GOVERNMENT'S RESEARCH REPORT INTO TRADING STANDARDS SERVICES

The Committee considered an update on the UK Government's research report on trading standards services, namely the 'Impact of Local Authority Trading Standards in Challenging Times', published in March 2015.

The research objectives were to:

- examine the benefits and efficiency of trading standards activities
- show how they align with national and local priorities
- show the impact of cuts to funding over recent years

The Committee also considered a response from the Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA) to the report.

The following issues were discussed during consideration of the report:

Reference was made to the informative Trading Standards' Financial Education Safeguarding Scheme development seminar held in February 2016 and it was proposed that this should be included a mandatory member development session as part of the post-election induction process. The Committee unanimously agreed to the proposal.

It was suggested that it would be beneficial for the Committee to invite the responsible officer from the WLGA to attend a future meeting. The Trading Standards Services Manager noted that Simon Wilkinson had been invited to attend but had been unable to do so on this occasion. However, he would ascertain whether he could attend a future meeting. The Committee agreed to this proposal.

Following a number of queries raised relating to court costs, the Trading Standards Services Manager confirmed that costs were only awarded following a successful prosecution and that these were only incurred costs. He informed the Committee that the Proceeds of Crime Act 2002 allowed the Authority to recover additional costs from criminals but these had to be justified. The Committee was also advised that an investigative officer had been appointed in October 2016 in order that the Authority could pursue more of these cases in the future. The Trading Standards Services Manager added that a further update could be provided for members at a future meeting.

In response to a comment on the impact of budget cuts on the service, the Trading Standards Services Manager confirmed that only the animal health element was devolved to the Welsh Government and it was the budget settlement for this element that had been significantly delayed during the current financial year.

The Executive Board Member for Communities wished to acknowledge the exemplary work that the small Trading Standards Team was providing and it was pleasing to note that the high standard of work had been an example of best practice nationally.

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that:

7.1 The report be received.

7.2 The Financial Education Safeguarding Scheme seminar be incorporated into the post-election Member Induction Programme as a mandatory session.

7.3 Simon Wilkinson from the WLGA be invited to attend a future meeting of the Committee.

8. ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH AND LICENSING SERVICES ANNUAL REPORT 2015/16

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 2015/16.

The following issues were discussed during consideration of the report:

Reference was made to the charges for pre-planning advice and it was asked whether the Unit might receive a percentage of this fee for its contribution to the planning process. The Environmental Health and Licensing Manager confirmed that this was being considered at present, especially in light of recent legislative changes.

Reference was given to a statement within the report which declared that the current framework for monitoring and managing the shellfish industry was not currently effective to secure successful enforcement. The Environmental Health and Licensing Manager clarified that Natural Resources Wales (NRW) was the responsible body in charge of the Burry Inlet area whilst the Welsh Government had responsibilities for the Three Rivers Inlet. The various agencies work was hampered by the issue of continuity of evidence and geographical challenges.

A query was raised as to why there 2015/16 saw a high volume of campylobacter cases. The Environmental Health and Licensing Manager informed the Committee that campylobacter occurred naturally in the environment rather than from commercial outlets and was at a high level nationally where sporadic outbreaks were not uncommon.

Following a query, a discussion took place regarding the treatment of vermin and pests. The Environmental Health and Licensing Manager stated that whilst the Authority had ceased its treatment service a number of years previously, the team carried out advisory visits to homes in response to complaints regarding vermin and pests. However, a pilot project to treat incidents in council properties was being undertaken at present to assess whether this was cost effective or not. A survey was also being undertaken asking the citizens of Carmarthenshire if they would be willing to pay for vermin and pest control in the future. The pest treatment pilot was being carried out by the Dog Wardens (alongside their other duties) and was expected to continue until the end of March 2017.

Following a query raised at the previous meeting regarding garden rubbish fires, it was asked whether Councillors could receive guidelines on this matter. The Environmental Health and Licensing Manager stated that she would provide guidelines to Councillors following the meeting.

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that the report be received.

9. REVENUE & CAPITAL BUDGET MONITORING REPORT 2016/17

The Committee considered the Revenue and Capital Budget Monitoring Report for the Environment Service, Public Protection Services and the Community Safety Service, as at 31st August 2016 in relation to the 2016/17 financial year. The following issues were raised in relation to the report:

Reference was made to the significant overspend in the Policy & Performance Division and that back office costs appeared to be escalating whilst front line services such as street cleansing were being cut back. The Business Improvement Manager informed the Committee that the costs for this division covered matters such as emergency planning and departmental training but that a review of the division was currently on-going. The Head of Transportation & Highways reassured the Committee that the department was looking at its costs with the view to protect front line services, which was why a number of reviews were currently on-going.

In response to the Park and Ride Service from Nantyci to Glangwili Hospital, the Head of Transportation & Highways stated that whilst the Health Board were contributing to the cost of the service, it remained a budget pressure which was being monitored. The general consensus was that whilst the Park and Ride Service seemed to benefit other main road users, the parking difficulties at Glangwili hospital remained an issue. The Executive Board Member for Technical Services informed the Committee that joint meetings were currently being held with the Health Board on this matter.

In response to an enquiry relating to livestock markets and the loss to date, the Group Accountant stated that she would forward further details on this matter to the member.

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that the report be received.

10. HALF-YEARLY COMPLAINTS AND COMPLIMENTS REPORT 2016/17

The Committee considered a report which provided members with statistics and analysis on complaints, compliments and enquiries received and dealt with during April to September 2016/17.

Disappointment was expressed that the Compliments and Complaints report continued to omit Councillor enquiries which were often complaints but submitted via a different process. It was felt that the report was therefore not a true reflection of the complaints or compliments received by the Authority. Following a brief discussion, the Communities and Safeguarding Manager stated that he would liaise with the Democratic Services Unit on this matter and would consider this in the next report.

In response to a query as to why 41% of complaints to the Environment Department received a response after the allotted time period, the Business Improvement Manager informed the Committee that often, the Department will agree an extension with the complainant in order to undertake a thorough review relating to their complaint. Whilst the Department will have responded to the complainant within the allotted timescales, a complaint will not be signed off as complete until it has been resolved.

RESOLVED that the report be received.

**11. ENVIRONMENTAL & PUBLIC PROTECTION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
ACTIONS AND REFERRALS UPDATE**

It was **RESOLVED that the update be received.**

12. EXPLANATION FOR NON-SUBMISSION OF SCRUTINY REPORT

The Committee noted the non-submission of the Waste Strategy Update and requested that it be considered at the next meeting. In response to a further query, the Executive Board Member for Technical Services confirmed that the work relating to the future contractual arrangements for the treatment, recycling and disposal of waste was still on-going.

Resolved that:

12.1 The non-submission be noted.

12.2. The Waste Strategy Update be presented at the next meeting.

**13. TO SIGN AS A CORRECT RECORD THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE
COMMITTEE HELD ON THE 26TH SEPTEMBER 2016**

Disappointment was expressed that the Executive Board Member for Environmental & Public Protection had not presented or forwarded an update on the latest position on the tackling of invasive plants. The Democratic Services Officer agreed to arrange for an update to be forwarded to Members in due course.

Reference was also made to the Committee's request that the new Police & Crime Commissioner be invited to a future meeting. The Chair informed the Committee that the Leader had decided that it was more appropriate to invite the Commissioner to a future meeting of the County Council and that this would be arranged in the near future.

It was also asked as to when residents would be informed of the new arrangements for collecting green garden waste. The Executive Board Member for Technical Services informed the Committee that County residents would be notified of the options in due course and that samples of bins would be placed in the Council's main administrative buildings so that residents could ascertain which solution would be best for their needs, prior to placing an order.

It was **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on the 26th September 2016, be signed as a correct record.

14. TO RECEIVE THE MINUTES OF THE JOINT MEETING OF THE ENVIRONMENTAL & PUBLIC PROTECTION AND SOCIAL CARE & HEALTH SCRUTINY COMMITTEES, HELD ON THE 26TH SEPTEMBER 2016

It was **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the Joint Committee meeting held on 26th September 2016, be received.

CHAIR

DATE