

ENVIRONMENTAL & PUBLIC PROTECTION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

19 APRIL 2021

PRESENT: Councillor J.D. James (Chair)

Councillors: J.M. Charles, T.A.J. Davies, J.A. Davies, K. Davies, S.J.G. Gilasbey, T.M. Higgins, E. Morgan, B.D.J. Phillips, J.S. Phillips, D. Thomas, A.D.T. Speake and A. Vaughan Owen.

Councillor D. Cundy - Substitute for Councillor P. Edwards.

Also in attendance:

Councillor C.A. Campbell, Executive Board Member for Communities and Rural Affairs;
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. Mullen, Director of Environment;
R. Hemingway, Head of Financial Services;
J. Morgan, Head of Homes & Safer Communities;
S. Pilliner, Head of Transportation & Highways;
A. Williams, Head of Waste and Environmental Services;
R. Edmunds, Consumer and Business Affairs Manager;
K. Harrop, Community Safety Manager;
D.W. John, Environmental Services Manager;
S.E. Watts, Environmental Protection Manager;
R. James, Group Accountant;
M. Evans Thomas, Principal Democratic Services Officer;
E. Evans, Principal Democratic Services Officer;
E. Bryer, Democratic Services Officer;
A. Kenyon, Senior Performance Management Officer;
J. Corner, Technical Officer;
A. Eynon, Principal Translator;
J. Owen, Democratic Services Officer.

Virtual Meeting: 11:00am - 1:30pm

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

An apology for absence was received from Councillor P. Edwards.

2. DECLARATIONS OF PERSONAL INTEREST INCLUDING ANY PARTY WHIPS ISSUED IN RELATION TO ANY AGENDA ITEM.

There were no declarations of interest made.

There were no declarations of any prohibited party whips made.

3. PUBLIC QUESTIONS (NONE RECEIVED)

The Chair advised that no public questions had been received.

At this point in the meeting, the Chair informed the Committee that for various reasons it was necessary to change the order of the remaining business on the agenda and was taken in the order of Item 5, Item 9, Item 4, Item 6, Item 7, Item 8, Item 10, Item 11 and Item 12. However, these minutes reflect the order of business itemised on the agenda for the meeting.

4. REVENUE & CAPITAL BUDGET MONITORING REPORT 2020/21

The Committee considered a report presented by the Head of Financial Services on the 2020/21 Revenue and Capital Budget Monitoring reports for the Environmental and Public Protection Services for the period up to the 31st December 2020.

The reported that the revenue budget was projecting to be over the approved budget by £486k as detailed within Appendix A appended to the report, the capital budget appended at Appendix D of the report detailed the main variances on capital schemes, indicating a forecasted net spend of £10,062k compared with a working net budget of £11,410k thus giving a -£1,348k variance.

In addition, it was reported that the expectation is that at year end £713k of Managerial savings against a target of £1,176k was forecasted to be delivered. Furthermore, Policy savings of £139k put forward for 2020/21 were projected to be on target.

There were no queries or comments raised in relation to this report.

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that the Revenue and Capital Budget Monitoring Report be received.

5. TASK AND FINISH REPORT - TRADING STANDARDS SERVICES - FINANCIAL EXPLOITATION SAFEGUARDING SCHEME (FESS)

The Committee received a revised report of the Task & Finish Group it had established on 10th June 2019, to review the Trading Standards Services – Financial Exploitation Safeguarding Scheme (FESS).

The Chair of the Task and Finish Group explained that the recommendations contained within the report had been formulated by the Group following the consideration of a range of evidence over a series of meetings held between July 2019 and April 2021, however due to the Covid-19 pandemic there was a period of hiatus in the review during 2020.

The scope of the review was to explore whether the portfolio of crime prevention, victim support and education activities consolidated within the FESS initiative provided an effective strategy to help combat fraud victimisation and promoted corporate health and wellbeing objectives.

A member of the Task and Finish group commented that the review had been both interesting and informative and commended the Trading Standards Service for all the invaluable work in relation to the FESS initiative.

There were no queries or comments raised.

RESOLVED that the report be received and referred to the Executive Board for its consideration.

6. ENVIRONMENT DEPARTMENTAL BUSINESS PLAN 2021/22

The Committee considered the Environment Departmental Draft Business Plan 2021/22 in relation to those services falling within its remit as follows:

- Highways and Transport
- Waste and Environmental Services
- Business Improvement

The Executive Board Member for Environment presented the report and explained that the Business Plan provided a summary of the key actions and measures required to support the delivery of the Corporate Strategy and the Council's Well-being Objectives and was supported by detailed divisional plans subject to regular review.

It was reported that due to the Coronavirus COVID-19 pandemic the plan was an abbreviated plan, as it would usually include a review section, which was covered in the Service COVID-19 Impact Assessments previously submitted to this Scrutiny.

The following issues/questions were raised on the report:

- Clarification was sought on actions and what success would look like. It was asked about the key actions and how the measures that attribute the actions linked?

The Director of Environment explained that this year, the business plans were presented in a different manner due to the pandemic. The consequence of the pandemic impacted on the normal timing of the development of Business Plans as officers were required to concentrate on responding to the pandemic. Therefore, a corporate decision was taken to present the tabulated version of the plan which was different to the what the Committee had received in previous years which included the narrative to provide the background to the key action.

In addition, the Director of Environment explained the purpose of Business Plans in that the business plans enabled departments to identify the areas of work it would continue to carry out, the importance of this was to ensure that in the event of efficiency savings the plan would explain how services would continue to be delivered. In addition, the plans were utilised as a platform to set out aspirations and explore new avenues.

- In response to a comment raised implying that the Business Plan was very generic and more details on timescales would be beneficial, the Director of Environment emphasised that the 2021/22 Business Plan had been developed in a summary format and should the Committee have general feedback on the way that the Business Plans had been written, further discussions would be necessary. The Director of Environment stated that she welcomed the Committees views in relation to the development of future business plans, however in reference to this plan, it would be beneficial to receive information on which actions the Committee would like to receive more detail on. The Head of Highways and Transportation provided the Committee with verbal update in relation to the developments to the Transport sector.
- In light of the comments raised regarding the content of the business plans, the Head of Homes & Safer Communities stated that Departmental Business Plans were high level and were backed up by Divisional Business Plans which provide more detail. However, he had noted the comments and would consider the actions further ensuring that each has a corresponding measure in order to assess the impact of an action.
- Reference was made to the measures within the Business Plan. It was identified that the measures used percentages throughout the plan and was commented that percentages as a measure does not always provide the true story. It was asked if it was possible to change percentages to numbers. The Director of Environment stated that the measures were expressed corporately using percentages, however acknowledged that it was important to also understand the numbers and agreed that percentages could portray a different picture in relation to low numbers. In order to provide greater clarity, the Director of Environment stated that she would feed this point back to the performance team to enquire if there was a way to express results using numbers in addition to percentages.
- A further concern was raised in relation to the measures, with specific reference to B and C class rural roads. It was raised that work on these roads had been promised over a number of years but had not yet been completed. It was asked how these could be improved going forward and agreed more clarity in the measures was necessary. The Head of Highways and Transportation explained that the details on the condition of roads were contained within the separate Highway Asset Management Plan and condition report which provides a review of the network of roads in Carmarthenshire considered by Scrutiny Committee Members on an annual basis. In addition, the ever-decreasing budget does have an impact upon the work on improving roads however, the department continuous to seek grant funding.
- In response to the comments raised regarding the actions and measures, the Senior Performance Management Officer explained that the review process would entail a quarterly monitoring report presented to Committee which would then be fed into the Annual report.

- In response to comments raised, the Director of Environment suggested that Committee Members consider the Divisional Plans which contain more details.
- It was commented that there seemed to be an inconsistent approach between departments.

In light of the comments raised, the Chair proposed that the committee does not receive the Environment Departmental Draft Business Plan 2021/22 and seek that further information be included within the actions and measures addressing the comments raised and for the Environment Departmental draft Business Plan 2021/22 be submitted for consideration at the next meeting. This was duly seconded.

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that further information be included in the actions and measures to address the comments raised and that the Environment Departmental Draft Business Plan 2021/22 be submitted to the next meeting for consideration.

7. DEPARTMENT FOR COMMUNITIES DEPARTMENTAL BUSINESS PLAN 2021/22

To be consistent with the comments raised in Minute 6, the Committee;

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that further information be included in the actions and measures and that the Department for Communities Departmental Business Plan 2021/22 be submitted to the next meeting for consideration.

8. THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S DEPARTMENTAL BUSINESS PLAN 2021/22

To be consistent with the comments raised in Minute 6, the Committee;

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that further information be included in the actions and measures and that the Chief Executive's Departmental Business Plan 2021/22 be submitted to the next meeting for consideration.

9. FUTURE KERBSIDE WASTE COLLECTION STRATEGY

The Committee considered a report on the Future Kerbside Waste Collection Strategy which was presented by the Executive Board Member for Environment. The report provided the future options and route for future service delivery for the kerbside collection of waste and recycling.

The report provided information in relation to the considerations, measures, strategy options and sought the Committee's opinions and views on the following service considerations:

- the move to weekly recycling collections;
- the change to three weekly restricted residual collections;
- the collection of glass at the kerbside;
- the collection methodology of recycling.

It was reported that one of the drivers for change was that whilst the current service model had enabled the Authority to exceed the statutory 64% target, further change was required to meet the 70% target from 2024/25 and the potential 80% target by 2030.

In addition to the report, the Committee received a supporting presentation delivered by the Environmental Services Manager on 'Shaping the Future of Waste Collections in Carmarthenshire'. The presentation provided information in relation to the considerations and covered the following:-

- Performance
- Challenges
- Operational Challenges
- Contamination
- Policy
- Beyond recycling
- Welsh Government Waste Collections Blueprint
- Kerbside vehicle
- Recycling Service Options
- Recycling frequency
- Results and conclusions
- Workforce and Public Engagement

The Committee noted that the service was no longer fit for purpose and as a consequence generated operational challenges. In addition, it was reported that currently Carmarthenshire was the only Authority in Wales which does not deliver a weekly dry recycling service, or collect glass at the kerbside.

In relation to the methodology, the Blueprint (Kerbsort) collection methodology was the only collection method which could potentially achieve Welsh Government funding subsidy.

The following issues/questions were raised on the report:

- It was commented that the proposed new kerbside glass collection would reduce the requirement for glass centre recycling points which was increasingly being utilised as a location for fly-tipping.
- In response to a concern raised in relation to the change in frequency from weekly to fortnightly collection of nappies and incontinence waste, the Waste Services Manager explained that all Absorbent Hygiene Product clients would be contacted and their needs assessed with the potential to provide with wheeled bins if necessary. It was reported that potentially there were 16,000 AHP clients and the cost of weekly collections would be significant.
- It was asked, which methodology was the preferred option? The Waste Services Manager stated that it was a matter for the Committee and the Council to explore and agree on the preferred method. However, in relation to cost it was highlighted that the Blueprint (Kerbsort) collection methodology was the only collection method that could potentially achieve Welsh Government funding subsidy. In addition, the Blueprint collection proposal offered the greatest carbon benefit.

- In relation to the glass kerbside collection service, a concern was raised that boxes of glass left at the kerbside would encourage vandalism. The Director of Environment stated that interference in waste was present despite the method used. However, there was a need to be alert to such incidences and in order to manage this, clear communication was necessary and implement appropriate management of those areas where vandalism occurs.
- In response to a query raised in relation to the size of the Blueprint Kerbsort collection vehicle, the Environmental Services Manager explained that to compliment the larger vehicles, smaller vehicles would be available to make collections within rural areas. In response to a further query regarding the suitability of the small vehicles in rural areas for use on narrow roads, the Environmental Services Managers reported that the use of smaller vehicles in restricted areas had been successful in other Authorities.
- A query was raised in relation to the capacity of the independent compartments located within the Blueprint Kerbsort Collection vehicle used to keep materials separated and what would happen should one compartment reach its maximum capacity before the others? The Environmental Services Manager acknowledged that this was likely to occur particularly in the case of cardboard, therefore it would be necessary to undertake a thorough design of the methodology and its operation prior to any commencement.
- Concern was raised that should the collection of black bags be reduced to one a week this could encourage an increase in contamination. The Environmental Services Manager explained that an initial kerbside sort would be carried out by the collection operatives, any identified cross contamination would be managed by way of a letter of an explanation to the householder providing the reasons for non-collection, with the offending waste being left.
- The Environmental Services Manager, in response to a query regarding a consultation process confirmed that a full public and staff consultation process seeking views and comments would be carried out accordingly.
- In relation to the close proximity of some properties, it was commented that collection boxes could present an issue regarding space on the kerbside. The Environmental Services Manager explained that there were a number of options of what the design of the kerbside sort containers would be. An example of which could be the provision of a stacked trolley style and possibly an introduction of communal pickup points both of which would work to minimise the spread of waste containers on the kerbside.
- In response to a concern raised regarding reduction of black bag collections the Head of Waste and Environmental Services explained that in excess of 40% of the contents of black bag waste was recyclable and if households managed waste recycling successfully, 3 weekly collections should suffice.

- A concern was raised regarding the probability of the County experiencing an increase in fly-tipping due to the reduction in black bag collections. The Environmental Services Manager stated that in terms of service change and to reduce instances of fly tipping additional staff resources would be in place to manage communications, public engagement and enforcement.
- In response to a comment regarding the placement of and the length of time dog/cat waste within black bags prior to collection, the Director of Environment appreciated that this matter could become unpleasant and therefore would explore how other Authorities had managed this issue with a view to incorporating an appropriate solution into the design of the future system.

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND that the Executive Board continue to develop and consult on appropriate delivery options to meet the statutory targets and address challenges as contained within the report.

10. EXPLANATION FOR NON-SUBMISSION OF SCRUTINY REPORT

The Committee noted the non-submission of the Air Quality Management Area (AQMA) – Future Delivery Plan which had been deferred to be considered the next Committee meeting on 18th May 2021.

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that the non-submission of scrutiny report be noted.

11. FORTHCOMING ITEMS

The Committee considered the list of forthcoming items to be placed on the agenda for the next meeting scheduled to take place on 18th May 2021 and was afforded the opportunity to request for any specific information that Members may wish to include within the reports.

The Chair informed the Committee that the report on the Place Making Charter was due to be considered by the Community and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee as it resided under the remit of Communities. In light of this, this report would be removed from this committees Forward Work Programme.

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that with the removal of the Place Making Charter report, the list of forthcoming items to be considered at the next scheduled meeting on the 18th May 2021 be noted.

12. TO SIGN AS A CORRECT RECORD THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE COMMITTEE HELD ON THE 5TH MARCH 2021

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on the 5th March, 2021 be signed as a correct record.

CHAIR

DATE