

SUBJECT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 3 - TUESDAY, 12 JUNE 2018

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE SUBJECT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 3
HELD IN COUNCIL CHAMBER - CIVIC OFFICES ANGEL STREET BRIDGEND CF31 4WB
ON TUESDAY, 12 JUNE 2018 AT 09:30**

Present

Councillor JC Spanswick – Chairperson

SE Baldwin	TH Beedle	N Clarke	P Davies
A Hussain	DRW Lewis	JC Radcliffe	RMI Shaw
RME Stirman	G Thomas	E Venables	MC Voisey
DBF White			

Apologies for Absence

DG Howells and JH Tildesley MBE

Officers:

Sarah Daniel	Democratic Services Officer - Scrutiny
Julie Ellams	Democratic Services Officer - Committees

Invitees:

Kevin Mulcahy	Group Manager - Highways Services
Zak Shell	Head of Neighbourhood Services
Mark Shephard	Corporate Director - Communities
Councillor Richard Young	Cabinet Member Communities

40. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

RESOLVED That the Minutes of a meeting of the Subject Overview and Scrutiny Committee 3 of 21 March 2018 be approved as a true and accurate record.

41. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None

42. NOMINATION OF MEMBER TO SCRUTINY PANEL

Recommended

The Committee nominated Cllr David Lewis to sit on the Public Service Board Overview and Scrutiny Panel.

43. CORPORATE PARENTING CHAMPION NOMINATION REPORT

Recommended

The Committee nominated Cllr DBF White as its Corporate Parenting Champion to represent the Committee at meetings of the Corporate Parenting Cabinet Committee.

44. HIGHWAY SERVICES REVIEW

Members considered a report on the impact of the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) on Highway Services. The Corporate Director Communities outlined the level of efficiency savings in the highways services budget and the reduction in staff whilst trying to maintain an appropriate level of service. He explained that the majority of services were a statutory provision however the exact level of service or standard was not specified. He outlined the asset value of the highway network and the expected future pressures. He also referred to the need for innovative solutions and collaboration to improve responsiveness and resilience in the future.

Members were expecting a People2 report to be included within the Highways Services Review and they questioned the value of considering this report without that information. The Corporate Director Communities explained that the People2 report was not part of the Highway Services Review.

Members discussed grass cutting and in particular, current weather conditions, the reporting of hazards, the different lengths of cut, drainage and ecological corridors, checks on the work of the contractors, procurement and criteria for the tender and value for money. The Head of Neighbourhood Services explained that grass cutting was not part of the Highway Services Review and the officers that specialised in grass cutting were not in attendance. However he would pass on the Committee's comments to the relevant officers in advance of the procurement of a new grass cutting contract.

The Group Manager Highway Services referred to the DLO service and the experience and diversity of the team in carrying out duties that would otherwise require individual specialist contracts outside of the authority. Members asked for schedules of grass cutting and highway resurfacing within the Borough.

Members discussed the maintenance of street signs, cleansing and the removal of undergrowth, TCC's sharing the costs of replacing signs and statutory and non-statutory requirements to clean different signs. The Group Manager Highway Services explained that his team was responsible for the work and that there had been a significant reduction in staff. Highway Inspectors would identify any work that needed to be carried out and schedules updated to incorporate replacement, cut back or cleansing if required.

The Head of Neighbourhood Services explained that there were originally 4 hazarding gangs but that had now reduced to 1. The team made every effort to allocate the resources effectively but it was a huge challenge. He reported that an environmental grant had been secured for a study into biodiversity and roadside verges and the results would be available later this year.

Members discussed a number of other issues including maintenance work at the bus station, fixing potholes, clearance of gullies and the use of goats to clear land in a more natural way.

The Cabinet Member Communities reported that he was listening to the Committees questions, concerns and comments on the appearance of the area. Officers were mindful of safety and doing the best they could. He was also grateful to some of the Town Councils for stepping up and taking on some of the responsibilities.

Members asked for more information on general defects and intervention levels. The Head of Neighbourhood Services reported that they had been successful securing capital for resurfacing the highway network. Following a presentation on the level of investment required, they had secured £1.3 million from WG and internally had £5 million over the next few years to maintain a highway asset with a value of in the order of 1 billion pounds. This would mean that the worst of the roads could be repaired and they

could attempt to maintain the status quo. The Cabinet Member Communities referred Members to a detailed report that had recently been submitted to Audit Committee on highways inspections and complaints.

A member referred to the current revenue budget of £4m per annum which he believed to be perilously low. He welcomed the opportunity to work more intelligently and collaboratively to deal with more than 10 thousand requests per annum. The Corporate Director Communities agreed and said there was a projected schedule but this contained an element of confidentiality. Members stated that the better informed they were, the easier it was to manage situations.

Members asked how inspections were arranged taking into account how quickly problems could develop. The Group Manager Highway Services explained that he was unable to give an exact programme of inspections but generally the town centre was inspected more often because of the footfall. If an issue was reported then officers would attend. Inspections were carried out in line with policies of similar authorities. There were 4 inspectors constantly out walking the streets within the borough and a lot of work going on in the background all within a 40% reduction in budget.

Members discussed new technology and energy efficiency, additional revenue from parking to help fund highways, Section 106 agreements and savings from LED lighting. Members agreed that considerable time was spent on referrals for issues that had already been reported. They asked if there was an app or process to digitally report issues. If they could see if an issue was already reported then they would not need to waste further time. The Head of Neighbourhood Services reported that significant progress had already been made with the new BCBC website and more improvements were planned.

Members discussed the benefits of using a map system where residents could indicate where problems were and receive reassurance that the site of the issue had been located.

Members noted that officers did an excellent job under difficult circumstances.

Members referred to the highway department decision to re-join the Association for Public Service Excellence (APSE). This allowed comparison with similar authorities across the UK. The Corporate Director Communities believed it was valuable to join even though it had been a policy decision to leave. ABSE was of varying value to different service areas and there were a number of statistical reports available.

Members discussed the camera enforcement vehicle and asked if Terms of Reference were available and how it would be used during the six week school shut down. The Group Manager Highway Services explained that the vehicle would primarily be used for school parking and bus stops and as a visual deterrent. Members discussed the potential use of the vehicle and discussed enforcement and tax /insurance. Members welcomed the vehicle which would be a huge deterrent and should improve both adult and child safety.

Members discussed school crossing patrols and difficulties recruiting staff. They were advised that there was a set of criteria for having a school crossing patrol officer and the criteria could be sent to Members for information. The Cabinet Member Communities added that it was a technically complex list based on new stringent standards introduced in 2017. He agreed that a school crossing patrol was a very important role but recognised that it was difficult to recruit staff. A Member reminded the Committee that it was the responsibility of the parent to get the child to school in a safe manner.

Members discussed the different restrictions outside schools and enforcement issues.

The Scrutiny Officer advised Members that if they wanted to make a referral regarding procurement, a criteria form had to be completed and submitted.

Highways

Members discussed the report and had particular concerns relating to the following:

- Grass cutting in the Borough
- Street signs – cleaning and Maintenance
- TCC's potentially sharing costs – though this would result in pre-cepts being increased
- Street Lighting
- Digital Transformation and the use of a digital App to report issues in the community
- Membership of APSE
- School crossing patrol officers
- Civil parking officers

Following discussions members requested the following further information:

1. A schedule of Grass Cutting in the Borough
2. A schedule of resurfacing highways in the Borough
3. What criteria is used to determine the frequency in which certain highways are inspected
4. Copy of the report that went to the Audit Committee on Highways
5. Terms of Reference for the vehicle enforcement camera that patrols the schools
6. Criteria for sites to be considered essential for the need of a school crossing patrol
7. Show the Highways budget savings as a % of that of the whole Directorate
8. Provide APSE data from the report electronically if possible

Members wished to make the following recommendations

1. Members recommended that Officers explore how they can better convey the way in which information such as work schedules for highway repairs, grass cutting, road resurfacing and other areas under the Highways remit is shared as the lack of information often leads to frustration from residents and duplicate referrals being received. Members believe if the information is readily available to residents and Councillors there would be less unnecessary and duplicate referrals received.
2. Members recommended that officers in Communities Directorate work with the Digital Transformation team to improve the use of information sharing through the use of ICT and explore the options of the development of an App for residents and Councillors to use to enable them to report issues in their areas such as potholes and defective street lights. Members stated this would lead to less repetitive referrals coming through as residents could track if an issue had already been reported and how it has been prioritised.

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3. In relation to the above recommendations Members have requested a definitive timeline and action plan on how this will be progressed
4. Members recommended a member development session be arranged on BridgeMAPS

45. URGENT ITEMS

None

46. FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME

The Scrutiny Officer presented the feedback from previous meetings of the Subject Overview and Scrutiny Committee 3 and identified the list of responses including those still outstanding.

The Scrutiny Officer explained that no item had yet been scheduled for the 23 July 2018 meeting and suggested that the Committee could request that the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee allocate the Plastic Free County Borough item referred by Council, to that meeting. This could include a comparison with other authorities and details on what was being done within council offices including recycling.

Members asked if that report was ready and also discussed other options such as the Supporting People Grant criteria form which had been submitted, feedback from Kier (including progress a year into the contract and options for terminating the contract), procurement and an obligation to attend Scrutiny if requested, Parks and Playing Fields, the CAT process and progress since the last report, and Empty Properties. The Scrutiny Officer clarified the position regarding Kier and explained that Kier had been invited to one meeting and officers had attended accordingly.

Members agreed to request that the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee allocate the Plastic Free County Borough item referred by Council to the 23 July 2018 meeting. Members asked for CAT to be allocated to the September meeting followed by Parks and Playing Fields.

Conclusions

- (1) The Committee approved the feedback from the previous meetings of this Committee and noted the list of responses including any still outstanding.
- (2) The Committee requested that the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee allocate the Plastic Free County Borough item referred by Council to the 23 July 2018 meeting and for CAT (progress since the last report) to be allocated to the September meeting followed by Parks and Playing Fields.
- (3) The Committee considered the criteria form at Appendix C.

The meeting closed at 12:10