

ENVIRONMENT AND HIGHWAYS SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

(Committee Rooms A/B - Neath Civic Centre)

Members Present:

10 December 2015

Chairperson: Councillor I.D.Williams

Councillors: D.W.Davies and S.K.Hunt

Officers In Attendance Mrs.N.Pearce, M.Roberts, D.Griffiths, H.Hasan, K. Lewis and S. Owen

Cabinet Invitees: Councillors Mrs.S.Miller and P.D.Richards

1. **TO RECEIVE THE MINUTES OF THE ENVIRONMENT AND HIGHWAYS SCRUTINY COMMITTEE HELD ON 29 OCTOBER 2015**

Noted by the Committee

2. **TO RECEIVE THE MINUTES OF THE ENVIRONMENT AND HIGHWAYS SCRUTINY COMMITTEE HELD ON 6 NOVEMBER 2015**

Members were informed that in relation to the discussions on bulk waste collections the Contact Centre Manager had confirmed that the correct advice was provided by the staff in the contact centre.

Members raised further concern in relation to advice that had been given previously in relation to where bulky waste items should be placed for collection. Members highlighted that on occasions constituents had been advised to place their items at the front of the properties even though the normal collection point for normal waste was the rear of the property. It was agreed that this should be checked by officers.

Following scrutiny the minutes were noted.

3. **TO RECEIVE THE SCRUTINY FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME 2014/15.**

Noted by the Committee.

5. **HIGHWAY AND DRAINAGE SERVICES REPORT CARD**

Members considered the Highway and Drainage Service Report Card that summarised the service priorities, key measures and key actions for the service.

Members were advised that part of the service involved Section 72 failed reinstatement notices. This is where utility companies fail to reinstate the high highways to their former standard once they have undertaken works. The Council fines the company and also insists that the reinstatement works are undertaken to a satisfactory standard.

Concern was raised in relation to the sickness absence figures and the fact that it was above the Council average. Clarification was sought on the number of staff within the service. It was confirmed that there was around 100 members of staff within the service and the service manager confirmed that he manages the sickness absence issues personally and follows the corporate policy for managing sickness absence.

Members asked whether the figures were a mix of short and long term sickness absence issues. It was confirmed that this was the case and in the previous year if there was no long term sickness absence issues then the figures for the service would have been around the 5 days per employee.

Following Scrutiny the report was noted.

6. **PRE SCRUTINY**

The Committee scrutinised the following matters:

Cabinet Board Proposals

- i. **Air Quality Updating and Screening Assessment 2015 – 2021**

Members considered a report on Air Quality that was a snapshot of a larger report that contains a large amount of data which would be made available to Members if they wished to read it.

Officers stated that the most common problems are due to PM 10 pollution. Members were informed that part of the County Borough was subject to an air quality management plan. Within this area there is a limit on how many breaches of pollution level. The current limit on breaches allowed in a calendar year is 35 and current figures are 25 breaches so the Council is on target.

However, officers stated that they would like to reduce the breaches significantly before contemplating undeclaring the air quality management area.

Members were advised that there was a particular specific problem in one area of Neath due to traffic pollution. It was confirmed that one of the houses within the management area was closer to the road than other properties and this caused the high levels that could potentially cause future health problems.

Following scrutiny the report was noted.

ii. Fleet Asset Register

Members asked whether any surplus equipment could be sold to community groups particularly given that the groups were now possibly undertaking maintenance of facilities themselves.

Officers noted that the general rule was that the equipment was sold at auction to ensure that the best value price was achieved. Members asked whether the Officers could identify a residual value and then sell to the Community. Officers saw problems with this approach but information could certainly be provided detailing where items are placed for auction so groups could bid for equipment if desired..

Following scrutiny the report was noted.

iii. Highways Structures Asset Protection and Maintenance

Members considered a report on the progress on the County Bridge Assessment, Strengthening and Maintenance Programme and the

Implementation of the Code of Practice for the Management of highway structures, footbridges and other public rights of way.

All of the assets are part of a backlog and now the Council is concentrating on the critical structures so that communities remain open.

With regards land slips Members were advised that some of it is outside of the Council's due restriction but it is the Council's duty to keep the highways open. Members were advised that this is a very complex process which results in significant costs.

Following scrutiny the committee was supportive of the proposals to be considered by the Cabinet Board.

iv. Installation and Accreditation of MOT Class 4, 5 & 7 Testing Facility at Tregelles Court Vehicle Maintenance Workshops

Members considered a report that sought approval to install a vehicle test station. Officers stated that the main purpose was to allow the Council to bring back the testing in house as tests are currently being undertaken at three different sites.

Members were advised that there would be minimal start-up costs and it would provide far more benefits including job security for the staff.

Officers stated that whilst also being a financial benefit it would also save time. The facility could also generate income by allowing the public to pay for an MOT test.

Following scrutiny the committee was supportive of the proposals to be considered by the Cabinet Board.

The meeting was subsequently abandoned as Members left the meeting and was not quorate.

CHAIRPERSON