

ENVIRONMENT AND HIGHWAYS SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

(Committee Rooms A/B - Neath Civic Centre)

Members Present:

24 November 2016

Chairperson: Councillor I.D.Williams

Vice Chairperson: Councillor S.Rahaman

Councillors: Mrs.R.Davies, E.E.Jones, C.Morgan,
D.M.Peters and Mrs.A.Wingrave

Officers In Attendance Mrs.N.Pearce, M.Roberts, D.Griffiths,
D.M.Adlam, A.Lewis, N.Evans and
Miss.C.Davies

Cabinet Invitees: Councillors E.V.Latham and A.J.Taylor

CHAIRPERSON

1. **TO RECEIVE THE MINUTES OF THE ENVIRONMENT AND HIGHWAYS SCRUTINY COMMITTEE HELD ON 13 OCTOBER 2016**

The Committee noted the minutes.

2. **TO RECEIVE THE MINUTES OF THE SPECIAL BUDGET ENVIRONMENT AND HIGHWAYS SCRUTINY COMMITTEE HELD ON 8 NOVEMBER 2016**

The Committee noted the minutes.

3. **TO RECEIVE THE SCRUTINY FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME 2016/2017.**

The Committee noted the Work Programme.

4. **HIGHWAY DEVELOPMENT CONTROL SERVICE REPORT CARD**

Members considered the report card for the Highway Development Control Unit.

Officers advised that in relation to Service Measure 4 the granting of Heavy Goods Vehicles Operators Licence is meeting the current demand but this could be an issue in the future as the service waits for a new IT system to be introduced.

Members questioned the sickness absence figure as it was deemed to be high and Officers stated that this was due to an individual who had been subject to an operation on their spine and therefore had a long recovery process. Members were pleased to note that a return to work process had now been completed and the individual had returned to full time employment.

Members queried whether there had been significant staff reductions within the service and Officers stated that there had been a reduction from 11 to 6.

Officers made Members aware that there are occasions when there is a problem in meeting the internal 21 day application limit due to the complexity of applications and this does have knock on effect to the planning department but it is manageable.

Following scrutiny the report was noted.

5. **ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH AND TRADING STANDARDS SERVICE REPORT CARD**

Members considered the service report card for the Environmental Health and Trading Standards Services.

Officers highlighted that there had been 3 cases of long term sickness absence that had caused the figures to be above the Council average.

Members asked whether it was a problem that staffing numbers had reduced. Officers responded by stating that it is sometimes a problem to undertake assessments but the department prioritises the higher risk businesses. However, this issue will be put forward as a budget pressure. Officers advised that the department is currently undertaking a review and career grade training programme to

maximise the number of fully qualified staff to maximise resilience across both Environmental Health teams.

Members gave an example of a property within the County Borough that had been unoccupied for many years and the grounds were overgrown on several occasions. It was noted that when an enforcement notice was served remedial works were undertaken but soon after the situation manifests again. Officers stated that they would look into this case in more depth outside of the meeting.

Members asked what had been the take up in relation to Landlord Training and officers stated that the promotion of Rent Smart Wales had remained the responsibility of the Welsh Government and it has resulted in more interest than they can cope and a backlog of registrations.

Following Scrutiny the report was noted.

6. **REDUCE, REUSE, RECYCLE QUARTER 2 HIGHLIGHT REPORT**

Members considered the 6 monthly progress report on the Corporate Improvement Objective – Reduce, Reuse, Recycle. Members were reminded that this one of the six corporate improvement objectives set by the Council.

Offices stated that the current situation was that approximately two thirds of the County Borough was now part of the Recycle + programme. Members asked was there an update in relation to the side waste policy that had recently been introduced. Officers stated Feedback from crews had identified about 150 properties that were regularly putting out a larger number of excess bags and these were being visited by a recycling officer. A couple of businesses being run from homes and requiring a trade bin had also been identified. It was noted the highest number of excess bags were 30.

Members noted that the report identified approximately 80% of the County Borough's residents were recycling but wanted some clarity on the remaining 20% and what the Council was doing to encourage them to recycle. Officers stated that initially they were investigating those households with a large number of black bags and will work towards the lower number over time. It was noted the last participation survey was now some time ago and before the side waste reduction was introduced so the participation figure was probably higher which would correspond to feedback from the crews.

Officers stated that the Minister at Welsh Government was considering more powers for Waste Enforcement
Members stated they would like more to be done and officers acknowledged they were aware of some issues within different parts of the County Borough. They would be working to address these but it should be noted that there are over 96,000 refuse and recycling collections every week. The national strategy requires a change of culture required for those households who do not recycle which will take some time to achieve.

Following scrutiny the report was noted.