

ENVIRONMENT AND HIGHWAYS SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

(Committee Rooms 1/2 - Port Talbot Civic Centre)

Members Present:

8 November 2016

Chairperson: Councillor I.D.Williams

Councillors: M.Crowley, D.W.Davies, E.E.Jones,
S.Rahaman and Mrs.A.Wingrave

Officers In Attendance Mrs.N.Pearce, M.Roberts, D.Griffiths and
N.Evans

Cabinet Invitees: Councillors E.V.Latham

1. **CONSULTATION ON ENVIRONMENT BUDGET AND DRAFT SAVINGS 2017/18**

Members considered the report on the Environment Directorate Budget and Savings for 2017/2018.

Officers stated that the level of savings required in 2017/2018 is £11.2m and over the next three years amounted to £36m.

Officers noted that within the report there were a couple of errors and these would be highlighted to Members at the opportune time. Members were advised that there were some savings that had been offered previously that would now not be taken forward.

The first saving that has been removed is the planned cost efficiencies in the Pollution Control and Contaminated Land. Officers advised that it would not be beneficial for the Council to make this saving as the work to deal with contaminated land is now being done in house rather than outsourcing.

Members considered the savings in relation to Asset Sponsorship. Officers regretfully informed Members that up until recently 17 roundabouts in the County Borough were sponsored realising circa £30k income however, in the last week or so 11 have been removed. Officers continued that feedback had been requested on why the sponsorship has ceased but in all likelihood it would be in relation to

the revenue realised from the investment. Members were advised that there would be additional areas where advertising could be placed such as gateway areas to towns and villages in the County Borough.

Officers however, advised that the savings of £75k is likely to be delayed until 2018/2019. Members asked whether it was one company per roundabout or could more than one be placed on each roundabout. Officers confirmed that one company per roundabout and they would have signs on each spur.

Members also asked whether there was any correlation between roundabout sponsorship and an increase in accidents at those sites. Officers confirmed that this wasn't the case.

Members were advised that ENV 639 Waste Collection and the main impacts should read Savings from side waste restriction. Officers advised that this saving was as a result of the Task and Finish Group that identified the level of restriction and that from June 2017 the restriction to three bags will be implemented and this will realise the savings.

Members queried why the Public Convenience at Resolven was singled out for closure. Officers advised that a review of provision of Resolven would be presented to the Environment and Highways Scrutiny Committee because of an historic arrangement that linked to the adjacent car park with associated costs included in the Streetcare budget. Members were further advised that there would be a review of all other conveniences across the County Borough.

Members asked whether there was the opportunity for innovative ideas on alternative use for the building. Officers advised that a report will be coming to the Committee in due course and if Members are minded to close the facility then it would be handed over to the Estates Department who would market the building which may well lead to a change of use but also include a public convenience.

Officers advised that in relation to saving ENV 645 this was the incorrect wording on the main impacts and it should read "Full Year's impact of savings partially delivered in 2016/2017". Members welcomed this explanation as they had concerns in relation to the statement that there would be a reduction in jobs that will reduce waste enforcement. Officers advised that a reduction in posts in this area was not proposed.

Officers advised that the savings in relation to the MENTOR System were due to bringing in a new in house system so they would now not need to pay for the software licences.

Members welcomed the prospect of merging the Crematorium and Cemetery Services and suggested that once the amalgamation happens perhaps the service could offer a genealogy service whereby the Council could sell the details of deaths, burials and cremations to family members who may be researching their respective family trees.

Officers explained the saving on Green Waste and that the Head of Streetcare has challenged his staff to see whether they can make Green Waste collection easier for residents whilst saving money for the Council. Members asked why there wasn't a figure attributed to this savings and it was confirmed that the review was ongoing and a report would be presented to Members in December that would provide options for consideration.

Members were informed that ENV 601 was reviewed two years ago in relation to school crossing patrols and this is the result of the need to reinstate a school crossing patrol at a school that now meets the criteria for a school crossing patrol. Members were advised that this would result in an additional pressure for the unit.

Members raised concern in relation to the two savings suggested in relation to Community Transport that amounted to circa £460k. The Head of Engineering and Transport stated to Members that the savings were brought forward to 2017/2018 from the subsequent year.

The Head of Service continued that 8 day centres had closed and they were dealing with the tail end of the process impacting on drivers, escorts and fleet. Members were informed that 23 staff had taken Voluntary Redundancy, 7 had gained alternative employment within the Council and some have left the organisation. The section was currently in the process of disposing of 26 vehicles.

Members noted that mention had been made of further reviews in Social Services particularly around complex needs. It was stated that the Social Care Health and Housing Scrutiny Committee had recently been informed that the review of complex needs would not go ahead and the savings would not be realised. The Head of Service then stated that this could impact on the ability of the service to meet the

total savings indicated within the report and he would have to review the position

Officers clarified that the FFP proposal related to the withdrawal of free Christmas parking from 2017 onwards. Members will be considering this year's free Christmas parking at the Environment and Highways Scrutiny and Cabinet Board on 24th November 2016.

Members were asked to note that the Welsh Government had made available across Wales a pot of circa £3m of which Neath Port Talbot would receive circa £130k. Officers advised that this is an unhypothicated revenue allocation. Should Members decide to allocate this to the Parking Budget during the budget round, then the Parking Account will still be in deficit following the recent initiative to support town centres through reduced car parking charges.

Members asked for it to be noted that whilst the Council is spending a significant amount of money regenerating our town centres in the County Borough this should be considered when reviewing the wider budget issues to ensure that we assist people to be able to use the town centres.

Following scrutiny the report was noted.

CHAIRPERSON