

STREETSCENE AND ENGINEERING SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

(Committee Rooms A/B - Neath Civic Centre)

Members Present:

19 October 2018

Chairperson: Councillor S.M.Penry

Vice Chairperson: Councillor S. ap Dafydd

Councillors: A.R.Aubrey, N.J.E.Davies, W.F.Griffiths,
A.McGrath, R.W.Wood and J.Hale

Officers In Attendance M.Roberts, J.Davies, A.Lewis and P.Thomas

Cabinet Invitees: Councillors A. Wingrave and E. Latham

1. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

Officers referred to paragraph 2.1 Corporate Plan Key Performance Indicators 2018/2019 – Quarter 1 Performance (1st April 2018 - 30th June 2018), and informed the committee that a request had been received by a Member of the committee following the previous meeting for a further breakdown for waste and recycling indicators. Officers tabled the information which was not captured on the new Corporate Performance and Risk Management System. The committee asked for the information to be circulated via e-mail to all Members of the committee following the meeting.

Members commented that some local authorities in England were no longer recycling yoghurt pots and certain types of plastic, as it was considered not worthwhile. Members queried whether officers were planning to do something similar in the future. Officers stated that some plastics had a better market value than others. Officers reported that a lot of research was being undertaken by the industry into recycling plastics, and that officers were keeping the issue under review.

The committee noted the minutes.

2. **PRE-SCRUTINY**

The Committee scrutinised the following matters.

Cabinet Board Proposals

2.1 Arboricultural Management Plan

Members questioned whether the Council would be liable if a tree situated on Council owned land fell onto a citizen's property and caused damage. Officers stated that the council was responsible for trees on council land, however each incidence would be subject to individual circumstances.

Following scrutiny, the Committee were supportive of the proposal to be considered by Cabinet Board.

2.2 Management of potholes

Members queried that with less money coming down from Welsh Government to local authorities, how were officers expected to deal with continuous pressures particularly with severe weather predicted for the coming winter. Officers informed the committee that despite pressures the service was still generally performing satisfactorily as evidenced by the low number of successful third party claims.

Members queried if the department waited for potholes to be reported by the public or whether potholes were proactively identified. Officers stated that officers regularly inspected the roads and further information was detailed in the maintenance plan which was published online. Officers informed the committee that the Council had a legal requirement to publish a maintenance plan which it should adhere to. Officers stated that ultimately, the aim would be to always identify emerging potholes before calls were received by members of the public, for example, by equipment mounted on the Council's waste vehicles which regularly traversed the Council's roads. Officers stated that a review had been carried out by the Council's insurers of the management processes and they were generally satisfied with the Council's arrangements for dealing with potholes. Officers acknowledged that it was not possible to ensure that all roads in the county borough were defect free at all times and hence the need for a maintenance plan setting out

inspection frequencies and response standards. Officers informed the committee that a new code of practice was due to be introduced that month and that officers would be bringing back a further report on the code in the near future.

Members referred to the new alternative systems detailed on page 78 and 79, and asked officers to provide an update on the progress made in relation to the Archway and Bobcat vehicles. Officers reported that they had already used and trialled the technology. Officers stated that it was important to use the correct tool in the right situation. Officers stated that they were planning to replace one of the current Hotboxes. Officers informed Members that they were in the process of determining if the technology was value for money or whether it would be more cost effective to hire the equipment when it was required instead.

Members queried whether the materials currently being used to fill potholes were durable, and questioned whether there were alternative products that could be used that were longer lasting such as plastic. Members stated that MR6 plastic filler was considered to be 60% stronger and more durable than most conventional materials and queried whether Officers were considering using it. Officers informed the committee that they had received a presentation from a company offering the use of plastics in road maintenance construction, but did not consider it to be a good value for money alternative option. Officers stated that only 15% of plastic waste materials were used in the mix drawn from industrial waste materials and, taken with the cost, the benefits were deemed to be minimal.

Members commented that potholes appeared to occur frequently at the base of speed bumps, and queried whether it would be easier to replace speed bumps with speed cushions, as this could alleviate pressure on the team. Officers informed Members that older speed bumps were slowly being replaced with speed cushions which should address this over time. Officers stated that in some cases a drainage problem was an underlying issue.

Members referred to point three in Appendix H on page 81 regarding the mechanism which would allow Members and the

public to upload photos when reporting defects to road surfaces to the Council. Members added that there had been a trial carried out, but queried whether this was due to be rolled out soon. Officers informed Members that IT had programmed the job into their schedule of work and were awaiting confirmation of when the work would be completed. Officers informed Members that the benefits of this system included allowing officers to make a judgement on job priorities rather than having to go out to visit the site first, which in turn would speed up action. Officers added that another advantage of the system was that it would help pin point the exact location on the map where the defect has occurred.

Following scrutiny, the Committee were supportive of the proposal to be considered by Cabinet Board.

3. **FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME 18/19**

The committee confirmed that it would prefer a training session instead of a report for the Customer Contact Centre Information item. Officers agreed to arrange a training session on the subject.

The committee noted the work programme.