

STREETSCENE AND ENGINEERING SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

(Council Chamber - Port Talbot Civic Centre)

Members Present:

5 July 2019

Chairperson: Councillor S.M.Penry

Vice Chairperson: Councillor R.W.Wood

Councillors: S.apDafydd, A.R.Aubrey, C.Galsworthy,
D.Keogh, A.McGrath, A.L.Thomas,
W.F.Griffiths, R.Davies, J.Hale and S.A.Knoyle

Officers In Attendance D.Griffiths, N.Pearce, M.Roberts, S.Curran and T.Davies

Cabinet Invitees: Councillors E.V.Latham and A.Wingrave

1. **MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

That the Minutes of the meeting held on 24 May, 2019, be approved.

2. **JAPANESE KNOTWEED**

Members discussed the circulated report which gave the first yearly update on the Japanese Knotweed Management and Treatment Service operated by Environmental Health and Trading Standards, from April 2018 to March 2019.

The treatment of Japanese Knotweed on Council owned land was discussed, and it was noted that before April 2019, Environmental Health Officers would treat areas on a reactive basis, when alerted by a complaint. Since April 2019, when a small allowance was built into the budget, Officers had begun to proactively map areas of the County Borough and identify hot spots in order for comprehensive treatment plans to be put in place.

Members noted that currently the Council was only mapping areas of Japanese Knotweed on Council owned land, and not areas owned by housing associations. Officers confirmed that the Council was only currently treating their own land, however they also offered the chargeable service, which may be of interest to Housing Associations. The continuation of this treatment programme was reliant upon the continued availability of a budget.

Officers explained that a briefing note would shortly be distributed to all Councilors in order for them to identify areas of Knotweed growth in their Wards. It was hoped that treatment of Japanese Knotweed on Council owned land could be treated at the same time as appointments for the chargeable service, in order to avoid duplication of work in the same area.

Other areas for discussion included:

- 'Adverse possession' of land
- Homes bordering Network Rail land
- Japanese Knotweed management plans for mortgage purposes

It was hoped that Members would promote the chargeable service, where relevant, to their constituents. Officers had also spoken to local estate agents about the service and would soon be releasing more social media publicity.

There were a number of factors that affected how effective the treatment was, including whether the homeowner took on board the aftercare instructions; the weather and the volume of spray. Small to medium areas of Knotweed treatment had proven most successful. Several treatment options were available under the chargeable service, including stem injections.

Members noted that this was the first annual update report on the treatment of Japanese Knotweed, and subsequent reports would be built into the Streetscene and Engineering Scrutiny Committee forward Work Programme going forward.

Following scrutiny, the report was noted.

3. **PRE-DECISION SCRUTINY**

The Committee scrutinised the following Cabinet Board item:-

Key Performance Indicators 2018/2019 – 1 April 2018 – 31 March 2019 (Full Year)

Members queried the figures relating to Stage 2 complaints which had been upheld, as they felt that the percentage reported in the circulated report should be representative of more than the one complaint detailed. Officers would provide further details to Members as soon as they were available.

Road safety was discussed, including the process following a serious injury or fatality, in order to prevent this from reoccurring. It was noted that the current Road Safety Plan was due to be revised in 2020, and the way in which investigations into accidents were dealt with could be subject to change.

Members also discussed:

- Current budget pressures in relation to performance
- How targets were set

Members noted that safety critical repairs and health and safety issues were given priority, and unexpected complications such as replacement of safety barrier protection; edge fails and collapses all created extra pressures on maintenance budgets. Officers would circulate details concerning how roads were tested and the four criteria of road surfaces to Members.

Following scrutiny, the monitoring report was noted.

4. **FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME 19/20**

Following today's meeting, Members of the Committee would take part in a Streetscene and Engineering Scrutiny Committee Forward Work Programme (FWP) workshop session, which would allow the opportunity for Members to identify items they would like to add to the FWP and scrutinise in 2019/20.

The Committee noted the Forward Work Programme.

CHAIRPERSON