

STREETSCENE AND ENGINEERING SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

(Committee Rooms A/B - Neath Civic Centre)

Members Present:

19 January 2018

Chairperson: Councillor S.M.Penry

Councillors: A.R.Aubrey, N.J.E.Davies, R.Davies, J.Hale,
C.James, A.McGrath, R.W.Wood and
S. ap Dafydd

Officers In Attendance M. Thomas and S. Curran

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

1. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST FROM MEMBERS**

The following Member made a declaration of interest at the commencement of the meeting:

Cllr R Davies: Report of the Head of Engineering and Transport re: Traffic Order Glan Y Afon Ystalyfera as she is a Governor of Ysgol Gymraeg Ystalyfera Bro Dur.

2. **MINUTES OF THE STREETSCENE AND ENGINEERING SCRUTINY COMMITTEE HELD ON 1ST DECEMBER 2017**

The Committee noted the Minutes.

3. **MINUTES OF THE STREETSCENE AND ENGINEERING SCRUTINY COMMITTEE HELD ON 11TH DECEMBER 2017**

The Committee noted the Minutes.

4. **SCRUTINY FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME 2017/18.**

The Committee requested the following items be added to the Forward Work Programme:

Update on Safety Certificates held by the Contractors on the Approved Contractor List

Opening Hours Recycling Centres

Grit Bins- an update on the previous Task and Finish Review findings and progress against any actions.

The Committee noted the Forward Work Programme.

5. **PRE-SCRUTINY**

The Committee scrutinised the following matters:

Cabinet Board Proposals

5.1 Japanese Knotweed Management and Treatment Service

The Committee received information in relation to a Japanese Knotweed Management and Treatment Service as contained within the circulated report.

The Committee were made aware that within appendix 1 of the report, reference to the management plan costs on page 3 and 5 should be **£120** (which includes VAT) **not £100** as shown in the report.

Members asked if it was the intention to grow the service into a business and maximise the potential income generation. It was explained that the model being proposed is based on a cost recovery model. If the service was successful it could be expanded if it was feasible to do so.

Members raised concern about those who would be unable to afford the service. It was explained that the service is designed to be affordable and the costs are felt to be reasonable and based on cost recovery. Members were pleased to note that there was an option for staged payments to make the service more affordable.

A discussion was held on the different services available in the private sector at different costs and Members asked if more information on the comparison that had been conducted among commercial operators be circulated to them via email.

The Committee asked if other Council's policies had been reviewed. Swansea Council was used as an example, however Members noted that the service provided in Swansea is a different model whereby the quotes are given on an individual basis.

Further information was sought on the breakdown of the costs and it was explained that all elements such as officer time, treatment and accommodation costs have been carefully considered.

Members asked if a 5 year plan was mandatory and if it could be opted out of at any time. It was explained that while every case would be carefully monitored it would be the home owner's decision to opt out at any time. An early opt out however may affect the effectiveness of the management and treatment plan.

The Committee asked for assurances that offering this new service wouldn't have a detrimental impact on existing Council Services. It was explained that this service would utilise different personnel and resources and would be regularly reviewed to ensure existing services are not adversely affected.

Members noted that the Council would be in a position to decline to service an area if it was felt it could not be treated successfully.

A discussion was held on Network Rail and the Civil Action that is available to home owners should they want to pursue any action against them. It was noted that this was not in the remit of this report as the proposals are for the provision of a paid for service to manage and treat Japanese Knotweed and is not an enforcement function.

Members were pleased to note that the Communications Team would be engaged to launch and promote the new scheme.

Members looked forward to receiving annual updates on the Service on progress and case studies.

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

CHAIRPERSON