

STREETSCENE AND ENGINEERING SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

(Committee Rooms A/B - Neath Civic Centre)

Members Present:

25 May 2018

Chairperson: Councillor S.M.Penry

Vice Chairperson: Councillor S. ap Dafydd

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

Officers In Attendance D.Griffiths, M.Roberts, Ms. S. Curran, J.Davies,
H.Hasan and A.Lewis

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	Joint Report of the Head of Engineering & Transport And Head of Property & Regeneration re: Proposed Prohibition of Waiting, Loading and Unloading at Any Time and Traffic Calming Measures Traffic Regulation Order at Glan Yr Afon and St. David's Road, Ystalyfera as she is a member of the Board of Governors at the school.
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2. MINUTES OF THE STREETSCENE AND ENGINEERING SCRUTINY COMMITTEE HELD ON 13TH APRIL 2018

The Committee noted the minutes.

3. PRE-SCRUTINY

The Committee scrutinised the following matters:

3. Cabinet Board Proposals

3.1 Flood Risk Management Plan Update

The Committee received information in relation to the Flood Risk Management Plan as contained within the circulated report.

Members queried how often culverts and gullies were inspected. Officers stated that the Authority was responsible for the maintenance of around 2,000 culverts and gullies and that it was difficult to visit them all regularly. Officers explained that the culverts and gullies were prioritised based on level of risk. Officers reported that gullies and culverts which were categorised as high risk were checked frequently when bad weather was forecasted in order to prevent any issues from occurring. Officers added that Mid and West Wales Fire Service also checked high risk culverts and gullies.

Members questioned the location of the flood risk area in Bryncoch South as indicated in the report. Officers stated that there were no significant flood risk issues in Bryncoch South, and that the mapping of flood risk areas were carried out by Natural Resources Wales (NRW). Officers added that NRW did not factor underground assets into their assessments, only water flowing over ground.

Members queried whether NRW were responsible for assessing flood risks throughout the county borough area. Officers informed Members that a three stage process was carried out every six years by NRW with input from the Authority to identify and review flood risk areas. Officers added that City and County of Swansea and Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council were required to keep additional flood risk management plans as both areas were considered high risk.

Members questioned why the land at Glyncoirwg had been identified as a flood risk when historically it had not experienced any flooding, particularly as it was situated on a hill. Officers explained that NRW had carried out the mapping and modelling taking into account topographical, geographical, geological and other factors. Officers

informed Members that despite being situated on a hill, some settlements could still be affected by flooding.

Following scrutiny, it was agreed that the report be noted.

3.2 Information on Refuse and Recycling Collections

The Committee received information in relation to the Refuse and Recycling Collections as contained within the circulated report.

Members queried why the cost for agency workers in the service was so high. Officers stated that it was important to look at the cost in context, and that the cost of waste collection and disposal equated to 50p per household per week which was 24% of the Council's revenue spend from Council Tax. Officers explained that the costs were considered average compared to other local authorities. Officers informed Members that around 100 staff were employed each day to undertake various collections, and a back fill pool was required to cover absences such as holidays, sickness, training and paternity leave. Officers informed the Committee that the number of staff volunteering for overtime to cover back logs as a result of bank holiday periods and increased demand had reduced, and agency staff were being deployed to meet the needs of the service. Officers commented that staff contracts may need to be reviewed in future with the trade unions to look at placing an expectation on permanent staff to work overtime when required in order to reduce the reliance on agency workers. Officers reported that a review was currently taking place to look at the size of the reserve pool of staff to decide whether it was adequately resourced. Officers stated that increasing the reserve pool could potentially reduce the use of agency staff.

Members commented that agency staff cost the Authority over £800k in 2017/18, and queried whether it was possible to reduce spending on agency staff and increase the number of staff employed on a permanent basis instead. Officers explained that the previous year's costs included one off costs for the change programme, and that the review on ensuring that there was adequate cover in the staff reserve pool would achieve a reduction in the use of agency staff.

Members questioned whether the Authority were looking at acquiring smaller recycling vehicles in order to access narrow lanes, as some citizens had to place their recycling bins and bags at the bottom of their lane. Members queried whether it was possible to return the bins and bags to the relevant properties. Officers informed Members that replacement vehicles and alternatives were being looked into, but there were issues with regard to manoeuvring vehicles in a small narrow space especially when the recycling equipment left out for collection decreased the space further. Members commented that recycling bins and bags placed at the bottom of lanes was an issue for many citizens as their equipment was not always returned to the same place, and sometimes their own bins and bags were not returned to them.

Members queried whether there were two recycling collection rounds arranged each day, one for the morning and one for the afternoon. Officers reported that afternoon shifts were only arranged when there were back logs and increased demand, and these were usually staffed by agency workers. Officers informed Members that a review was being carried out to optimise routes in order to reduce overlaps and duplication where possible.

Members referred to the cost of hiring agency workers, and queried whether it was possible to employ staff on a full time basis with a dual function to cover work in the Neighbourhood Management team and Recycling and Trade Waste teams when required. Officers stated that an additional budget would be required to take on the extra number of staff, and this would exceed the cost currently spent on agency workers. Officers stated that there was a difference in the salaries paid and the hours worked in the teams which would create issues and discord in the workforce.

Members questioned whether there was a system in place to assist citizens with disabilities and reduced mobility to recycle their waste. Officers stated that there was a scheme in place, but citizens had to apply for the service. Officers added that information regarding the support available would be circulated to the Committee for information.

Members requested a further update in 12 months to review the cost of agency workers in the service area.

Following scrutiny, it was agreed that the report be noted.

Item 6 – Traffic Orders at Glan Yr Afon and St. David's Road, Ystalyfera

The Committee received information in relation Traffic Orders at Glan Yr Afon and St. David's Road, Ystalyfera as contained within the circulated report.

Members queried whether there was a risk that the objectors could come forward with documentary evidence claiming rights to the land before the 5th June. Officers informed Members that it was highly unlikely that the objectors had rights to the land as the documentary evidence would have already been submitted by this stage. Officers stated that the objectors had only been residing at the bungalow for four years and were not eligible to claim ownership of the land.

Members queried whether the current owners of the bungalow were able to combine their years of residency with the previous owners, which would make them eligible to claim rights to the land. Officers informed Members that the period of residency did not transfer from one owner to the next that would enable a claim to ownership of the land, they may however be able to claim or negotiate a right of access over the land.

Members questioned whether the traffic orders would be monitored. Officers informed the Committee that the overall project was the subject of a formal independent Road Safety audit process. Officers explained that there were four stages involved; stages 1 & 2 had been completed as part of the Design Development and Planning Approval stage. Officer informed Members that the traffic orders implemented were derived from this process. Officers stated that monitoring by the Passenger Transport, Road Safety, Highways and South Wales Police who will be on site observing and monitoring the situation over the coming weeks. Officers further explained that stage three of the process would entail a review of the new arrangements over a 12 month period once the school becomes operational. Officers added that any issues encountered during this 12 month

period would form the basis of a further final stage four audit. Officers informed Members that stage four provided the Authority with the opportunity to rectify any issues, and a report would automatically be brought before Scrutiny Committee and Cabinet Board if any of the traffic orders required amendment. Officers reported that St. David's Road and part of Glan Yr Afon were not designated safe routes to school. Officers explained that the designated safe route to the school had been placed on the school's website. Officers added that the Road Safety section had been working with the primary school to inform pupils and raise awareness of the new route to school.

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

CHAIRPERSON