

NEATH PORT TALBOT COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

Streetscene and Engineering Scrutiny Committee 20th November 2020

Report of the Head of Streetcare M. Roberts

Matter for Information

Wards Affected: All

Forward Programme Issues - Streetcare

Purpose of the Report:

To provide reports on topics as requested by Members at the recent forward work programme session held with officers from Democratic Services.

Background

Officers from Democratic Services periodically hold meetings with Members of the various scrutiny committees to discuss the forward work programme. At a recent session with members of the Streetscene and Engineering Scrutiny Committee information was requested on the following items:

- Waste and Recycling – An update on the different service elements (e.g. fly tipping, kerbside, enforcement) in relation to where they are now in the current circumstances, how they link together, and to provide a general overview of all services;
- Review of potential to extend the use of Public Space Protection Order (PSPOs); and,
- Cemeteries – An update on the impact of COVID 19

In response to these requests, details are provided in Appendices A to C respectively.

Valleys Communities Impacts:

Detailed in individual appendices where applicable.

Workforce Impacts:

Detailed in individual appendices where applicable

Risk Management Impacts:

Detailed in individual appendices where applicable

Consultation:

Not applicable with respect to the content of this report.

Appendices:

Appendix A - Update on Waste and Recycling Services

Appendix B - Review of potential to extend the use of PSPOs

Appendix C - Update on the impact of COVID on the Cemetery Service

List of Background Papers:

None.

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Update on Waste and Recycling Services

Refuse and Recycling Collections

Kerbside refuse and recycling collections have continued to operate throughout the pandemic and this is due in the main to the dedication and support of staff at all levels within the service, including those employees in Neighbourhood Services who have provided operational and supervisory support. At the present time the number of employees travelling together in a vehicle cab remains restricted to two and support vehicles (on-hire fiesta cars) are still be used by the third team member for travel to and from collection rounds.

Bulky collections were originally suspended at the end of March but were reintroduced in May and have been very busy since then. Bookings are not taken more than two weeks in advance to ensure the service could react to any requirements to suspend the collections again if necessary. The crew collect up to 20 properties per day. To help address a backlog of requests that had developed, in mid-October collection capacity was temporarily increased to two teams.

Hygiene collections have continued throughout and continue at this time.

Household Waste and Recycling Centres

Sites across Wales were closed as part of the original 'Lockdown' and reopened in Neath Port Talbot on the 26th May with a booking system in place to control the number of visits at any one time. The total number of bays available was reduced by 50% to assist with social distancing. The centres closed again for the recent 'Firebreak' but are once again open with the previous restrictions. The booking system has proved to be very helpful in keeping the facilities open and managing visits in a safe manner. The booking system may become a permanent management system going forward.

Transfer Station adjacent to Briton Ferry HWRC

The transfer station adjacent to the Briton Ferry site has remained open throughout the pandemic to transfer waste collected by the various Streetcare teams such as street litter, street sweepings, gully suckings, and bulk collection items.

Equipment Deliveries

There has been increased demand for recycling kit during the Covid emergency which remains high. Deliveries have continued throughout the

pandemic and are ongoing. Delivery resources have been supplemented from time to time by staff from other areas such as those not able to currently carry out their full normal duties.

Absorbent Hygiene Products (AHP)

Officers continue to plan for the trial of new pilot AHP collections to start early in the new financial year. Two new replacement '3 compartment' refuse trucks are currently on order which it is calculated should allow the Council to collect AHP including nappies etc. separately for reprocessing at almost no additional collection or carbon cost. Further information will be provided to members once the pilot rounds and collection receptacles are determined. The receptacles are being funded by Welsh Government grant. Alongside this, on the basis the AHP collections should ultimately be rolled out across the whole borough the Council is also participating in the all-Wales procurement of reprocessing facilities to produce products from AHP.

Trade Waste Collections.

Trade customers are normally invoiced twice a year for the service however due to the original Lockdown this year the first invoices were held back not to burden businesses, after which we then sought information on which businesses remained open and which were closed. Those who were closed were not billed for that period and we were able to claim this loss of income from the Welsh Government. Annual bills were then sent in October taking into account cost revisions and income collection activity continues on this.

Enhanced Bulk Recycling Service for Traders and Flats

This proposed service improvement which forms part of the Council's agreed waste strategy has been some time in the making and delayed by Covid, but plans are now well advanced to start rolling out the new large bins and collection in the new year and will take several months to complete.

Christmas and Textile Collections

Christmas collection dates have been set and all households will be receiving notification of these dates in the form of the annual 'collection calendar' which will be sent out shortly via the low cost DVLA bulk mail service. At the same time two months notification will be included further to the stopping of kerbside textile collections as agreed by Cabinet at the end of September.

Household Waste and Recycling Transfer Station, Crymlyn Burrows

Following previous Cabinet Decisions, the former 'MREC' operation has been insourced and a new staffing structure implemented in line with that of a transfer station, the latter taking effect on 1st October 2020. Work to remodel the facility in line with enhanced recycling drop-off and processing is now being put in hand. This will include removing the chimney, incinerators and refuse derived fuel production infrastructure, remodelling the interior for more rapid off-loading of recycling, material sorting (such as the separation of plastic and cans) and bulking of materials for transfer to re-processors. In addition to the money allocated by the Council to remodel the interior of the plant, grant funding has also recently been secured to install solar panels onto the roof of the main building and for the purchase of a baler which will provide greater flexibility on where the recycling can be sent for reprocessing. Given the nature of the project and the various technical aspects such as a new environmental control/ventilation system, recycling equipment and specialist demolitions, the consultant and contractor roles are being procured separately as opposed to a single 'design and build' contract. Following recent approval by Cabinet the appointment of the consultant is currently being completed with detailed design and appointment of main contractor to follow. Works should start on site next autumn.

Alongside the remodelling work and as also approved by Cabinet, a feasibility study is being arranged to assess the merits or otherwise of co-locating the collection fleets at the Transfer Station, the outcome of which will be reported to members in due course for decision with respect to whether staff consultation should proceed. Thinking towards the future, one advantage of the Transfer Station site is that the direct connection to the energy grid provided for the old energy from waste equipment may provide facility for electric vehicle charging of the fleet.

Waste Enforcement & Fly tipping

The team is currently operating with normal staffing levels. There are Covid risk assessments in place and these can slow down the investigation process especially in relation to the opening of waste bags. Rooms have now been adapted in civic centres to enable PACE interviews to take place which were previously suspended for some time, and some additional staff training has been identified as required and this is currently being sourced.

Team exercises are being carried out, as previously, in areas across the county borough in relation to dog fouling and littering.

Fly tipping removal is carried out by the neighbourhood zone teams. Staffing levels in the zone teams have however been significantly affected by the need to provide additional cover in refuse and recycling collections to ensure that the priority collection services are maintained. This in turn has increased the timescale for non-urgent fly tips to be removed. The removal of general fly-tipping is however prioritised as the fluctuating demand for cover in waste services permits. In terms of the quantity of fly tipping the information that is currently available for the first quarter of this year shows a mixed picture on a monthly basis compared to last year with some overall increase as shown below.

	April	May	June	Total
19/20	184	180	88	452
20/21	132	184	184	500

Review of potential to extend the use of PSPOs

General

Reports on Public Space Protection Orders have previously been presented to Members. In summary:

The Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014 introduced powers for local authorities, in consultation with others, to make Public Space Protection Orders.

The Act gave councils the authority to draft and implement PSPOs in response to the particular issues affecting their communities. Powers to create PSPOs came into force in October 2014.

PSPOs replaced a range of different orders including Designated Public Place Orders; Gating Orders; and Dog Control Orders.

The Council has PSPOs in place on Aberavon Beach which have recently been renewed, which replaced previous Dog Control Orders.

Scope of PSPOs

Both the Local Government Association and The Home Office have produced guidance for councils and frontline staff. A PSPO is designed to make public spaces more welcoming for the majority of law abiding people and communities. A Council can make PSPOs if it is satisfied that activities in a public space:

- have had, or are likely to have, a detrimental effect on the quality of life of those in the locality;
- is, or is likely to be, persistent or continuing in nature;
- is, or is likely to be, unreasonable; and,
- justify the restrictions proposed to be imposed.

Such activities may include, for example, owners not controlling their dogs; the use of alcohol / psychoactive substances; or gathering in large numbers.

A PSPO can set out restrictions or requirements that can be targeted at specific people; at certain times; or in certain circumstances. By way of example, in relation to dogs and their

owners, a PSPO could:

- Exclude dogs from designated areas;
- Require dog owners to carry bags for the removal of dog faeces;
- Require dog faeces to be picked up by owners;
- Require dogs to be kept on leads; and,
- Restrict the number of dogs that can be walked by one person at any one time.

Any one PSPO can cover a number activities, restrictions and requirements. The legal authority of PSPOs is not limited to Council land. PSPOs can be applied to any public space, that is: “any place to which the public or any section of the public has access, on payment or otherwise, as of right or by virtue of express or implied permission”. For example:

- Town centres
- Seafronts (including inter-tidal zone)
- Play areas (parks)
- Public highways

Furthermore, any one PSPO can cover a number locations and a number of different public spaces. The maximum duration of a PSPO is 3 years but at any point before the expiry of an order the Council can extend it for up to a further 3 years.

The terms of a PSPO, that is the designated area and the restrictions or requirements etc., may be varied at any time. However before making, varying or extending a PSPO the Council must consult with the local Police and relevant community representatives which may include regular users of an area affected or special interest groups.

Contravening a PSPO is an offense which an enforcing officer can address with a fixed penalty notice. An enforcing officer may be a Police Officer, PCSO, a Council Officer or other person designated by the Council. Where a fixed penalty notice is not paid the council may begin court proceedings and the maximum penalty on conviction is £1,000.

Discussion

It is understood some members would like to see the use of PSPOs extended with respect to dog control in particular, and it can be seen from above there is scope to increase their use. If members of the scrutiny committee wish to pursue extended use the following would be required:

- Identify the 'within scope' activity which it is believed needs to be addressed, including where and when, and what restrictions are considered should be applied;
- Determine expectations in terms of enforcement;
- Identify the cost of implementing and enforcing such a proposal and how these might be paid for;
- Confirm the priority of proposed measures compared to other needs; and,
- Present considerations to Cabinet Board and request the necessary public consultation is approved and the outcome considered.

As an example of what other Councils have done, in June 2019 Bridgend County Borough Council introduced the BCBC Public Spaces Protection Order Dog Control covering all public open spaces within the borough ("the Restricted Area"). The effect of the order was to impose the following conditions on the use of the land covered:-

- a) Person(s) within the Restricted Area to collect and dispose of the faeces of dogs within their control by removing it and depositing the dog faeces in a bag which should be left in a litter bin or taken home.
- b) Person(s) within the Restricted Area who have dogs within their control must carry bags or other suitable means for the collection of dog faeces.
- c) Person(s) within the Restricted Area must, when requested to do so by an Authorised Officer, place dogs in their control on a lead. The Authorised Officer must specify the location and duration covered by a direction given.

The restrictions do not apply to disabled persons as defined by the Equality Act 2010 where the person suffers from a disability which would prevent them from collecting their dog's faeces.

The proposal was subject to a 12 week consultation which received approaching 1100 responses.

Update on the impact of COVID on the Cemetery Service

The impact of the Covid Emergency on cemeteries has been as follows:

23rd March: Cemeteries remained open on 'Lockdown' but to ensure social distancing and avoid large gatherings, funerals were restricted to immediate family.

8th April: Cemeteries closed with access only when funerals and burials take place, with limit of 10 people introduced. Maximum depth of new graves restricted to two in Margam, where depth of 4 previously permitted, to assist with ensuring burial capacity.

30th April: Cemeteries re-opened to the public for visits to graves or memorials with limit of 10 continuing.

31st Aug: Number permitted to attend burials increased from 10 to 20. All other guidance and control measures remain in place. This limit remains the current position.

Burial Capacity

Maximum burial capacity is difficult to specify accurately because of the complexities around opening graves, given different graves in different cemeteries take differing times to prepare etc. However, 'business as usual' burial capacity is considered to be 10 per 'five day' working week, with a typical range of 8 to 12 per 'five day' working week. Contingency plans have been put in place to increase this number if required.

Burial Demand

Data on actual and pending burials since week commencing 30th March has been closely monitored and, in general, there has been no particular issues.

Whilst there were several Covid related burials in April, May and June there have been no Covid related burials reported since 19th June 2020. A comparison of burial numbers for this year compared to last year is given below.

	MONTH					MONTH					MONTH	
YEAR	January	February	March	April	May	June	July	August	September	October	November	December
2019	36	39	38	31	31	22	46	27	30	23	24	20
2020	37	36	34	25	39	31	26	36	26	26		
Difference	1	-3	-4	-6	8	9	-20	11	-4	3		
COVID 19 cases	0	0	0	5	7	3	0	0	0	0		

Other issues

One Sexton is currently off work following a positive test for Covid.

Numbers of people attending funerals have recently started to creep up.