

Streetscene and Engineering Scrutiny Committee

(Via Microsoft Teams)

Members Present:

5 November 2021

Chairperson: Councillor R.Wood

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

Officers In Attendance D.Griffiths, M.Roberts, C.Plowman, J.Griffiths,
C.Powney, S.Cook and J.Woodman-Ralph

Invitees: Councillors M.Harvey, A.Wingrave and
H.C.Clarke

1. **Chairs Announcements**

It was announced that Agenda Item 9 on the Cabinet Board Agenda '*Design Options for the Remediation of Cilmaengwyn Tip above Godre'r Graig Primary School*' had been withdrawn from consideration at this meeting to enable Officers to seek further supplementary information. It was confirmed that a report regarding this matter would be brought for consideration at the next meeting.

2. **Declarations of Interest**

The following Member made a declaration of interest:

Cllr. M. Harvey -

Re. Cabinet Board Agenda Item 8
– Annual Parking Report
2020/2021 as in his role working
for South Wales Police, he assess
car parks mentioned in the report
as part of the Safer Parking
Scheme.

3. **Parking Enforcement Operation 2021**

The Committee received a report regarding the Parking Enforcement Operation 2021, which detailed current staffing levels within the Authority's parking services section.

Members asked if the Council restricted the amount of permits given out in regards to the parking spaces available; and if this had any impact on the neighbouring streets, in particular terraced areas. In terms of the current policy, it was stated that two residents per household could receive parking permits; this was reduced to one permit if there was off-street parking areas or if the property had a garage. The current permit scheme did not guarantee a space within the resident bays, however it offered residents a better opportunity to park closer to their properties. It was noted that when Officers assess a street they must retain around 30% of the street as unrestricted, which allows for visitors and those who weren't able to park within a bay, to then be able to park within an unrestricted area; where there were very restricted streets, inevitably sometimes residents will have to park on nearby streets. Officers mentioned that with the increase of the number of vehicles privately owned, there were more cars than physical spaces on the streets in some areas, particularly where there were terraced properties. It was added that for a permit to be issued on a street, the car must be registered to a property on the street.

It was mentioned that there were some areas and spaces across the County Borough which could potentially be suitable for additional parking bays, for examples verges; Officers were asked if they could look into this type of solution and if there were any grants that could be utilised to complete this work. Officers stated that there were no specific grants to create off street residential parking bays; in the past, there had been schemes in which the Council was able to create off street parking bays, however there had not been any for some time due to the pressures on the highway maintenance budget. It was noted that this type of work was do-able if unplanned monies became available; the Team were open to suggestions and would always try and create additional parking, where possible, for residents. It was explained that Officers would need to be informed of specific issues in Members Wards in order for them to identify any funding opportunities to fund particular projects of work.

Members raised points concerning the shift pattern of the staff and the need for more resources in the service; and stated that although certain elements of enforcement had been effective, such as the mobile CCTV van, there would need to more of them in order to carry out enforcement more effectively. Officers confirmed that the CCTV van had been very effective since it had been introduced; however, under the legislation, the CCTV van could only enforce certain traffic orders such as those relating to double yellow lines, bus stops and bus laybys, zig zags and school orders. It was noted that complex changes were made when this vehicle was introduced due to the fact that every traffic order throughout the County Borough had to be digitalised; this was because the CCTV van picked up where an order starts and ends from a GPS. It was added that Officers recognised that traffic orders around schools also had to be completely regularised across the County Borough; this took a considerable amount of time to complete. Officers confirmed that they were currently working through costs to potentially purchase another vehicle due to the effectiveness of the current van and the amount of requests for an additional vehicle from Elected Members; this would increase enforcement in the County Borough, however the vans could only be in particular locations at certain times. It was confirmed that when the existing van needed to be replaced, a low emission, electric vehicle would be purchased and the same will apply when purchasing additional vehicles.

In terms of resources, it was highlighted that the staffing levels had more or less stayed the same since Local Authorities were given enforcement powers; since that time, over the last 20 years, there had been around 600 additional enforceable traffic orders that have been implemented across the County Borough, the number of surface car parks and off street car parks had increased, as well as some of the Country Park car parks that the Council enforces. In addition, it was mentioned that there had been an increase in activity at Aberavon Sea Front in the summer months and a lot of other tourist destinations in the County Borough; this was also impacting the service due to these areas becoming more popular, therefore Officers had to react to these factors. It was stated that there were severe pressures on the parking service due to these issues raised.

The Committee was informed that new developments have had a substantial impact on the urban areas, and had caused some residential streets to be affected; for example, there had been a lot of difficulties with displaced car parking at the university campus on

Fabian Way, and because of this Officers had deployed enforcement to the area when the university was in operation.

Another difficulty noted was the taxi ranks; however, colleagues in the Licensing Team had recently taken a report to Cabinet to enable a more joined up approach on the enforcement of the taxi ranks.

In regards to staffing levels, it was noted that the service had 10 Officers in total, two of those being Senior Officers; one job was currently being advertised as an employee had recently left the Council. It was confirmed that with the new recruit, the staffing levels would total at nine employees, as one Senior Officer had been deployed to assist with the Test, Trace Protect (TTP) Service. It was mentioned that the staff worked a split shift, and Officers highlight the various times and days that were in the schedule; Officers were also asked to work overtime to support night time enforcement.

A discussion took place in regards to the new parking meters, which now had contactless payment; Members queried whether they were easy to use. It was explained that the contactless feature was relatively easy to use; it required the user to enter their car registration number and tap their contactless card against the machine before a ticket would then be provided. Officers stated that there had been a phased plan of renewal of all of the pay and display parking meters across the County Borough; some were now solar powered meters, and others were hard wired. It was added that all of the machines were now bilingual, and there were various options to pay for parking; this included chip and pin payment, cash payment and contactless payment. Members were informed that the service was also in the process of rolling out a pay by phone option via the MiPermit facility, to all car parks across the County Borough; this was already in place at the Aberavon Sea Front car park, and allowed the public to pay for their ticket on their phone.

Officers highlighted that cash collection from the parking meters had been reduced significantly due to more people opting for card payment or cashless payment; the service had been able to review the cash collection system as a whole because of this. It was noted that there was very little cash now in the meters, and signs had been put up informing the public of this; there had been numerous incidents where individuals had tried to break into the machines, therefore it was important to ensure that the public were aware that the system was now predominantly cashless.

It was asked, where there were major issues with parking in certain streets, would it be possible to take away some of the grass verges to allow for additional parking spaces. Officers confirmed that they were content to identify opportunities where this could be carried out; there were various stages to doing this, one of which would include involving the Road Safety Team to obtain their views from a road safety perspective. It was mentioned that in some locations within the County Borough, Officers had advised against creating parking spaces on grass verges particularly around schools; in these instances Officers had looked at putting other mitigation measures in place. It was confirmed that in all cases, it would need to be identified if capital funding was available for the work to be carried out.

Officers provided information regarding the new legislation that was due to be issued during the term of the current Welsh Government; one of the main elements of this was pavement parking. It was explained that the powers of enforcement of pavement parking was going to be taken from the Police and provided to Local Authorities in Wales; this will provide significant additional pressures to the enforcement teams.

A suggestion was made to involve residents in discussions regarding identifying solutions to parking issues in residential areas.

Following scrutiny, the report was noted.

4. **Pre-Decision Scrutiny**

The Committee scrutinised the following Cabinet Board items:

Three Yearly Grit Bin Policy Review

Members were provided with the review of the Council's grit bin policy.

Officers explained that the grit bin policy was set in 2012, and had been presented to the Committee on a three yearly review basis since then; there had been no changes to the policy since it was set in 2012. It was highlighted that due to previous difficult decisions regarding the budget including cuts to the Neighbourhood Services, there was currently not a lot of monies available for extra activity within the service.

Members were informed that the grit bins were purchased in batches and were replaced when necessary, along with refills which could be purchased in line with the policy; last year, three grit bins were

reported as damaged and nine grit bins were absent from their usual location.

It was noted that the grit bin maintenance generates a significant amount of work and service demand for the Neighbourhood Team; in addition to the regular refills that were usually carried out, there were 100 requests for additional refills last year. Officers highlighted that there was a finite level of resource which was required to balance across a range of activities that the Neighbourhood Team carry out; due to the fact that the budget position hadn't improved, the recommendation was to maintain the policy for a further three years. Officers added that if Members wanted to review the detail of the policy, it would be important to consider the entirety of requests for grit bins from all Elected Members and ensure that whatever changes were made, fitted in line with the budget so that they could be funded and maintained.

Members expressed their concerns in regards to the current grit bin policy and highlighted the difficulties that were experienced during the winter months; particularly in areas where there weren't many grit bins or any at all. Members had hoped that more grit bins would be available, especially in areas where there were hills; it was asked if a mapping exercise had been completed to identify where the various grit bins were located and if the equability of them could be looked into.

Officers confirmed that the Council's geographical information system had a layer which covered where all of the grit bins were located across the County Borough. It was mentioned that the grit bin policy had an eligibility criteria which covered the necessary qualities and conditions of obtaining a grit bin for various areas; there were some areas within the County Borough which had more hills than others, therefore they would be a priority in obtaining a bin. Members were informed that because of this, the distribution will not be equal. It was added that under the current policy, Members were permitted to move a grit bin to another location within their Ward if required; however if the Ward did not have a grit bin to move, then this would not be able to happen.

A discussion took place in regards to the current guidelines contained within the policy. Members made various suggestions relating to what could be added to the policy and reviewed in order for improvements to be made; for example, taking age and vulnerability for residents into account, identifying if particular areas were prone to icing up

during the winter period and providing Officers with discretion if there was a solid case for an area to obtain a grit bin.

Following the discussions and concerns raised by Members, a formal amendment to the recommendation contained within the circulated report was proposed and seconded:

‘That the current Grit Bin Policy be continued pending a review of the policy by the Streetscene and Engineering Scrutiny Committee and a report be brought back for consideration to a future meeting of the Streetscene and Engineering Cabinet Board’

It was determined that the Committee were in support of the amendment to be considered by Cabinet Board.

Key Performance Indicators 2021/2022 - Quarter 1 (1 April 2021 - 30 June 2021)

Officers reported quarter 1 performance management data for the period 1 April 2021 to 30 June 2021.

Members made reference to the performance indicator relating to the percentage of waste, reused, recycled or composted; and highlighted that the target figures were increasing. Officers confirmed that the current target for this performance indicator was 64%, which would increase to 70% for the civic year 2024/25.

Following scrutiny, the report was noted.

5. Forward Work Programme 2021/22

Members requested that information relating to side waste enforcement within the Waste Service be added to the Forward Work Programme. It was agreed that this element would be included in the report on litter and fly tipping enforcement which was scheduled to be presented to Committee on 28 January 2022.

The Forward Work Programme for the Streetscene and Engineering Scrutiny Committee was noted.

6. Access to Meetings

RESOLVED: that pursuant to Section 100A(4) and (5) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded for the following items of business which involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 14 of Part 4 of Schedule 12A to the above Act.

7. **Pre-Decision Scrutiny of Private Item/s**

The Committee chose to scrutinise the following private Cabinet Board items:

Section 38 Highways Act 1980 Agreement, Commuted Sum Payment - Cae Morfa, Phases Three and Four Skewen

Members received a report in relation to the Cae Morfa Development Section 38 position regarding the level of commuted sums for the long term maintenance of the development.

Following scrutiny, the Committee were supportive of the recommendation to go to Cabinet Board.

CHAIRPERSON