

**Environment, Regeneration and Streetscene Services Scrutiny
Committee**

(Microsoft Teams Meeting/ Hybrid meeting in Council Chamber)

Members Present:

20 January 2023

Chairperson: Councillor S.Pursey

Vice Chairperson: Councillor T.Bowen

Councillors: W.Carpenter, A.Dacey, R.Davies, N.Goldup-
John, C.James, S.Grimshaw, S.M.Penry,
S.E.Freeguard and L.Williams

**Officers In
Attendance** D.Griffiths, C.Morris, N.Pearce, C.Plowman,
M.Roberts, N.Blackmore, N.Chapple, H.Jones
and J.Stevens

Cabinet Invitees: Councillors W.F.Griffiths, S.Jones and
D.M.Peters

Observers Councillor Carol Clement-Williams
Councillor Matthew Crowley
Councillor Heath Davies

1. **Chair's Announcements**

The Chair noted that the Members of the Scrutiny Committee had agreed to scrutinise the following items from the Cabinet Board agenda: Items 12 and 15.

Members were provided with a brief verbal update about the recent successful bid for the levelling up fund for the Neath Valley Heritage Corridor. Works will need to be completed before the end of 2024.

Disappointment was expressed that a successful bid was not achieved for Port Talbot. However, officers advised that work will continue to explore other funding streams to try and carry out work in Port Talbot.

2. **Declarations of Interest**

There were none.

3. **Consultation on 2023/24 Budget Proposals (Report to Follow)**

Members were presented with the consultation on 2023/24 Budget Proposals, as presented within the report circulated.

Concerns were expressed about the energy efficiency savings. The details of the savings are not specifically outlined within the budget. Further, it was noted that a 50% increase in energy costs has been allowed for within the budget, however there was also a statement within the proposals that costs could increase by 162%. Members queried if the energy efficiency savings would be enough to cover this possible increase.

Officers advised that they have asked for an energy review to be undertaken with more detailed costs to be brought back in 6-8 weeks. This will assist with identifying energy efficiency savings.

There are currently ongoing feasibility studies with regards to the buildings under council ownership and control, to determine if and how they can be used more efficiently. Also, if usage of the buildings can be reduced. This will be required to be undertaken without comprising on the service that is delivered.

Officers confirmed if there are specific proposals about street lighting they will be brought back before Cabinet. This will take place during the relevant financial year, if proposals are brought forward.

Members queried if there was a strategic plan or itemised proposal in relation to climate change, more specifically the current drainage systems that are in place within the borough. Officers outlined the current arrangements and actions that are in place to try and alleviate some of the flooding caused by the drainage systems. It was recognised that some of the issues were not caused by Council owned systems.

Members were advised that the updated Floor Risk Management Strategy would be coming before the relevant committee in September, before being submitted to Welsh Government.

Officers outlined elements of the DARE (Decarbonisation and Renewable Energy) Strategy. It is noted that it does not just relate to physical buildings, but also considers the behaviour of staff. The strategy is in place to work towards the goal of being net zero by 2030.

Members queried if there should be a specific budget allocated to climate change. Officers advised that there is a winter reserve budget which can be used when a response is required to extreme weather. There is a fund in the forthcoming budget to support the DARE strategy and climate change. When relevant feasibility studies have been carried out, the authority will be able to better understand associated risks and the impact that this will have on the budget.

Following scrutiny, members noted the report.

4. **Pre-Decision Scrutiny**

Audit Wales National Study - Net Zero Decarbonisation Baseline Review

Members were presented with the Audit Wales National Study – Net Zero Decarbonisation Baseline Review, as presented within the report circulated.

Members queried the specific dates the strategies outlined will be updated.

Officers advised that a report has been commissioned which considers the gaps between the DARE Strategy and the Carbon 2030 Action Plan. The next step is to undertake some work with the carbon trust to draft an action plan which will then be fully costed. The set up meeting to do this is scheduled to take place in early February. The process may take up to 12 months to complete.

With regards the DARE strategy, additional resource will be required to review the strategy and to implement some of the net zero work over the coming years.

5. **Urgent Items**

None.

6. **Access to Meetings**

To resolve to exclude the public for the following item(s) pursuant to Section 100A(4) and (5) of the Local Government Act 1972 and the relevant exempt paragraphs of Part 4 of Schedule 12A to the above Act.

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

The Transfer of Land and Construction of a Commercial Unit at Burrows Yard - Update (Exempt under Paragraph 14)

Following scrutiny, the report was noted.

CHAIRPERSON