

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

(Microsoft Teams Meeting/ Hybrid meeting in Council Chamber)

Members Present:

14 April 2023

Chairperson: Councillor S.Pursey

Vice Chairperson: Councillor T.Bowen

Councillors: W.Carpenter, R.Davies, N.Goldup-John,
C.James, S.Grimshaw, S.M.Penry, L.Williams,
S.E.Freeguard, J.Henton, J.Jones, S.Renkes,
S.H.Reynolds and D.Thomas

Officers In Attendance D.Griffiths, C.John, C.Plowman, J.Stevens,
S.Brennan, R.Crowhurst, G.Hughes, C.Roberts,
Ms.J.Smith, R.Turner and T.Rees

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

1. **Chair's Announcements**

The Chair welcomed the Committee and the invitees from the Education Scrutiny Committee and confirmed that the Scrutiny Committee had chosen to scrutinise Cabinet Board agenda items 13 and 19.

2. **Declarations of Interest**

Cllr. Scott Jones - Item 18- Personal, Non-prejudicial- Cllr. S. Jones has been appointed to the Wild fox board.

Cllr. Martyn Peters- Item 18- Personal, Non-prejudicial- Cllr. M. Peters has been appointed to the Wild fox board.

Cllr. Jeff Jones- Item 18- Personal, Non-prejudicial- Cllr. J. Jones has been appointed to the Wild fox board.

3. **Minutes of the Previous Meeting**

The minutes of the meeting held on 3rd of March 2023 were approved as an accurate record of proceedings.

4. **Response From Cabinet Board on Waste Strategy Task and Finish Group**

The Chair gave a background to the Waste Strategy Task and Finish Group and its subsequent report. The Chair explained that the letter is a response from Cabinet Board to the recommendations of the Task and Finish Group.

Members agreed to scrutinise the item as part of the Waste Strategy Report as the letter is included in that report.

The letter was noted.

5. **Healthy Travel Charter Report**

Members received information on the Healthy travel charter report as presented within the report circulated. Officers made members aware of an error on page 30 of the report. Officers advised that they have moved to a transfer station instead of the Material Recovery and Energy Centre (MREC) facility, this doesn't affect the overall scoring in the rating given to the item and will be amended.

Members wanted to know about the progress in safety of cyclists traveling to school and work. Officers explained that they are developing schemes and bidding for grants in relation to the Active travel plan and the hiring of two active travel officers is hoped to have greater success in getting grants for active travel routes.

Officers also felt that the new 20mph speed limit will help reduce the seriousness of incidents due to reduced speed.

Officers provided information about the education and training aspect of travel safety, such as curb craft in primary schools as well as comprehensive schools programme which includes independent travel, including bus use. Years 5 and 6 also get on road cycling training and level 3 training is being developed in comprehensive schools. Officers also explained that families (adults included) also can get training during family training days which helps plan routes and riding EV bikes.

Members expressed their concern about other road users in relation to cyclist safety and the hope of getting safer cycle paths. Members commented that the new officers in the team were a welcome addition to help access grant money, but members felt they need to keep thinking about moving on from a car centric approach in relation to sustainable forms of transport in projects to consider walking and cycling.

Officers explained that in relation to driving, there are driver initiatives for newly qualified and older drivers and training including motorcyclists and that picks up on raising awareness of all road users.

Members enquired about linking up cycling tracks. Members noted that the road between Pontrhydyfen and Cimla was dangerous for cyclists and wondered whether there were plans to fix the road between T-bones and Pontrhydyfen.

Officers explained that there is a scheme for an active travel route from Neath up to Cefn Saeson sports field which is a major piece of work and will probably be phased over a couple of years. Officers advised that going off that main route may be difficult as getting to T-bones is considered as a leisure activity and not in line with active travel and therefore not be eligible for active travel grants.

Following scrutiny, the report was noted.

6. **Pre-Decision Scrutiny**

Item 13 Waste Strategy Action Plan

Members received information on the Waste Strategy Action Plan as presented within the report circulated.

Members raised their concerns about the storage of the purple bags during summer months especially if waste collection moves to 3 weekly collections. Members were worried how residents would be able to store these bags.

Officers advised that if it did go to 3 weekly collections it would free up some resource and that could be diverted to recycling and nappy collections which would potentially make the nappy collections weekly, removing the issues. This would be looked at as part of the consultation process.

Officers said that the storage element of the scrutiny committee recommendations are accepted by officers. However, the purple bags would be presented for collection and the box would be used just for storage of those bags.

Members highlighted that the Task & Finish group put forward the idea of a presentation bin after reassurance from officers on the practicality of it. Members felt it was more hygienic and avoided confusion of having a receptacle that can't be presented for collection. Members wanted to understand what had changed since that discussion.

Officers advised that they were still in the piloting phase but explained that the pilot supports the view that people want storage bins rather than presentation bins. Officers advised that there is still an opportunity to revise it, however the service can't be extended currently due to resources and finances, however in the next two years things may change and improve. The recommendation from officers is for storage box usage rather than as presentation boxes.

Members were keen to monitor the situation during the pilot stage and get feedback from officers how the storage bins go, but also pilot and test the impact of using it as a presentation bin on update of the scheme and the cleanliness of the streets.

Officers said that from the consultation they have done the feedback has been mainly about storage, however if there were issues with presentation that would become apparent to members. Storage bins will be available to those who request them.

Members felt that the consultation with the public on 3 weekly bin collection should be deferred as long as possible to be able to get the message out first about the need for better recycling and food recycling. Members wanted some detail on why that proposal from the Task and Finish Group was rejected and an idea on timescales for the consultation.

Officers advised that there is a statutory deadline for exceeding the 70% target on food waste and this means that they would need to do a lot of work preparing and planning should the 3 weekly collections go ahead. In terms of the timescales, they would need to do some internal consultation first. The likelihood would be that consultation with the public would commence within the next 12 months.

Officers took on board members point that they hoped that the resident's aspect of consultation was done after the recycling and food waste messaging.

Members wanted clarity on what would be done for areas where there are no shops or public buildings where dog waste bags can be collected from. Officers advised that they see dispensers as a last resort because they often get vandalised or abused. They explained that they want to try everything they can to make a provision for those areas. Officers said that they should be in places that are secure and less likely to be vandalised but want to look at all other options. Officers will speak to all members about provision in their wards.

Members wanted to look at customer touch points and getting regular feedback from residents on how the service has been. They felt that broader piece of work would be useful and deeper than the citizens panel to help performance and service delivery. Officers advised they will talk to digital services about using the system to generate questions on the service.

Following discussions members, the following amendments were put forward from Scrutiny Committee for Cabinet Members to consider when making their decision:

- Measure 5 is approved with consideration of using the material storage bins for presentation as suggested by the scrutiny committee.
- Measure 11 is approved and notwithstanding the suggestion by Scrutiny to the contrary that be no deferral of consultations on a potential move to 3 weekly refuse collections however the consultation be carried out as a phased approach.
- A Communications protocol be developed to secure engagement with the public generally in relation to obtaining feedback on waste services via the work being undertaken through the established citizens panel and during customer touch points with the service.

Following scrutiny, the above amendments were supported to Cabinet Board.

7. Forward Work Programme and Committee Action Log

The Members of the Committee noted the Forward Work Programme.

8. **Urgent Items**

There was none.

9. **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.

10. **Japanese Knotweed**

Members received an update on the Council's policy and procedures with respect to Japanese knotweed as detailed within the private circulated report.

Following scrutiny, the report was noted.

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

19. Modular classroom accommodation at Ysgol Hendrefelin (Bryncoch site), Blaenhonddan and Crymlyn Primary schools.

Members received information on the Modular classroom accommodation at Ysgol Hendrefelin (Bryncoch site), Blaenhonddan and Crymlyn Primary schools as detailed within the private circulated report.

Following scrutiny, the recommendation was supported to cabinet Board.

CHAIRPERSON