



2022/2023

**‘Environment, Regeneration, Streetscene
Services Scrutiny Committee’s Annual
Report’**

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1. Chair's Foreword

It is with great pleasure that I present the Annual Report for the Environment, Regeneration and Streetscene Scrutiny Committee for the period June 2022 to May 2023.

This report covers our first year of a newly established and enlarged scrutiny committee, following a new council in the 2022 local elections.

Committee members, despite this learning curve of taking on new subject areas, or being newly elected have shown they are committed to the scrutiny process.

We have sought at all times to be a productive committee, producing recommendations which add value and aim to improve service delivery and outcomes for the residents we represent.

During the year we have completed two task and finish groups, as well as coming forward with a number of amendments to decisions, many of which have been accepted by the cabinet members.

I want to thank all committee members for their work, as well as the officers and cabinet members who have engaged productively with us, even through some tough and probing questioning.

Councillor S. Pursey, Chairman.
Environment, Regeneration and Streetscene Scrutiny Committee.

2. Introduction to Scrutiny

The Centre for Public Scrutiny suggests that there are four key principles to effective Scrutiny and they are:

1. provides 'critical friend' challenge to executive policymakers and decision-makers
2. enables the voice and concerns of the public and its communities.

3. is carried out by ‘independent minded governors’ who lead and own the Scrutiny process.
4. drives improvement in public services.

Scrutiny is an integral part of the Council’s political structure and in many ways, it plays a key role in assisting the Cabinet. Scrutiny Committees in the Council have met regularly through the year and have considered a wide range of issues. A number of the Scrutiny Committees have undertaken some in depth work as part of their forward work programmes, and this is highlighted within this document.

The Scrutiny Committees within the Council are:

- Cabinet
 - Policy & Resources Sub
- Education, Skills and Wellbeing
- Social Services, Housing and Community Safety
- Environment, Regeneration & Streetscene Services

Each of the Committees includes a mix of non-Executive Councillors that is politically balanced to reflect the political balance of the Council. The Chairs and Vice Chairs plus the Committee Membership are decided annually by Full Council. Each Committee meets at least 8 times during a Civic Year.

3. Purpose of Annual Report

3.1 The main aim of this report is to highlight the work that has been undertaken by the Environment Regeneration Streetscene Services 2022/2023.

3.2 The document may also facilitate discussions on additional items that could be included within the work programme for 2023/2024.

4. Overview of the work of the Environment Regeneration Streetscene Services during 2022/2023.

4.1 Number of Meetings

The Environment Regeneration Streetscene Services Scrutiny Committee met on 10 occasions during 2022/2023.

4.2 The Work Programme 2022/2023

Generally, the agendas for the scrutiny meetings have been consistent with those outlined in the forward work programme. The Committee agreed its Scrutiny work programme during their Forward Work Programme Workshops held on 01.07.22 and the 10.10.22.

When developing the work programme, it was essential to consider the key plans and strategies of the Council. The work programme also includes the results of any external inspections that had been undertaken within a specific service area or on a corporate level.

The review of the work of the Committee is included in the following pages has been structured to reflect the key roles of the Committee: Pre-Decision Scrutiny (which included policy development and review) and any items they wished to look at as part of their remit (usually for information purposes)

5. Key Issues considered during 2022/2023

Throughout the civic year the Committee is consulted on a number of areas that require decision. These range from routine general issues to the larger more complex decisions. Cabinet Board Members are in attendance during discussions and any views of the Committee are taken on board prior to making a decision.

The Scrutiny Committee also undertakes the performance monitoring role by considering a wide range of reports. Members challenge the information that is included which enables them to understand the issues facing the service. These reports are monitored on a quarterly basis.

As well as scrutinising key decisions, the Committee identifies topics within their remit in which they wish to look at in more detail. These items are usually for information purposes e.g. updating Members on specific projects of work.

The Council is well placed to demonstrate the improvements it has made to the scrutiny function, and it is essential that we continue to build on these developments and I look forward to the next year as we take forward the priorities of the Council.

- **Issues considered June 22 – May 2023**

Detailed in full in the table attached at Appendix 1.

Neath Port Talbot CBC Highway Technical Design Guide for Residential, Commercial and Industrial Developments

The officers introduced the report which sought endorsement of the new Highway Technical Design Guide for Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council. The Chair thanked the officers for their introduction of the report. Members expressed concerns that the document may not always be fully up to date, with all relevant legal and policy provisions, and wished to propose an amendment to the recommendations as listed below;

- Having due regard to the screening Integrated Impact Assessment it is recommended that Members approve the New Highway Design Guide for implementation subject to an appropriate disclaimer being placed on the Council's website highlighting that some legal and policy provisions may not be up to date and drawing attention to compliance with Llwybr Newydd, PPW11 and specific reference to the Active Travel Design Guidance 2021 (confirming this Council's commitment to Active Travel and sustainable transport). In addition, future amendments to the document to be brought back to Scrutiny for review prior to submission to Welsh Government by CSS or following updated versions from Welsh Government.

Following Scrutiny, and in addition to the amendment above, the recommendations were supported to Cabinet Board.

Subsidised Bus Service - Contract Extensions

Officer's notified members on the request to extend the current subsidised bus contracts until the 31st March 2023, as detailed within the circulated report. Officers agreed to Members request to draft a letter to Welsh

Government with the Cabinet Members, in consultation with the Scrutiny Committee. Members had concerns that there were a lot of unknowns with regards to the White Paper, and not having the outcomes of the consultation, members sought an explanation of the need to understand the indicative timescales of the implementations of the White Paper.

They also wanted further detail on the transition of interim funding arrangements after the current Bus Service Support Grant (BSSG) ends.

The recommendation was supported to the Cabinet Board.

Gelli Houses Tunnel Report

Members were updated on the condition of the disused railway tunnel and its priority for capital investment, as detailed within the circulated report. Members requested further detail on the capital investment opportunities, and how this aligned with the council's Capital Investment Program. It was proposed that a report was returned to the Scrutiny Committee within the next 12 months with an options appraisal, which explored potential capital investment opportunities, which reflected the stance in the IIA.

The recommendation was supported to the Cabinet Board with amendments as follows.

- That a feasibility study for future use be carried out and the subsequent options be brought to the Environment, Regeneration and Streetscene Services Scrutiny Committee within the next 12 months.

National Underground Assets Register

Members were updated on the request to join the UK Government sponsored Geospatial Commission's National Underground Assets Register Project, as detailed within the circulated report.

Members queried what the benefit would be for the Local Authority to participate with the project. Members asked that information be provided on the what the current staff, time and costs would be on gathering the information that would be required as this information would need to be updated every 3 months and could potentially affect resources. Officers highlighted that they currently don't have the information to provide, however informed the Committee that the overall success of this would be for everyone to take part.

The Committee felt it was important that a further report be brought back to committee Reviewing the decision, detailing further information around the costs and benefits of the scheme and how the Council wishes to continue with project.

Therefore, following a proposer and a seconder an additional recommendation was added to the main recommendation, as per below:

Having had due regard to the first stage Integrated Impact Assessment it is recommended that:

- The Council participates in the NUAR project and signs up the Data Distribution Agreement further to Option 2 in the report;
- The Director of Environment & Regeneration, in consultation with the Head of Legal and Democratic Services be authorised to sign the Data Distribution Agreement on behalf of the Council
- Should there be a revenue pressure arising from involvement in the project further to Option 2 then funding would need to be identified within the existing Environment & Regeneration budget should continuation be considered a priority.
- That a report be brought back in April 2024, detailing a Review of the decision inclusive of further information around the costs and benefits of the scheme and how the Council wishes to continue with the project.

Following Scrutiny, the above recommendation was supported by the Committee to Cabinet Board.

Key Performance Indicators 2022/2023 – Quarter 1(1st April 2022 – 30th June 2022)

Members received information relating to quarter 1 of the Performance Management Data detailed in Appendix 1 and the Compliments and Complaints information detailed in Appendix 2 for the period 1 April 2022 to 30 June 2022 for Environment, Regeneration and Streetscene Services Cabinet Board, as detailed within the circulated report. Members made requests in relation to the following KPI's.

PI/859 & PI/860 – Number of household missed collections

- Currently has a raw figure number, Members asked that it would be helpful to have this information as the total number expressed as a percentage and a target set on it.

- Members requested a new Performance Indicator detailing the percentage on missed collections that had been returned and collected, including information on the process on next steps. This would allow scrutiny to understand what collections were missed and how many of those were collected.

PI/559 – average number of days to collect excess and side waste

- Members requested a new performance Indicator on Excess and side Waste, number of days to collect/clear/investigate.

PI/906 - Percentage of successful waste enforcement prosecutions.

- Members asked that the fixed penalties and prosecutions be separated in to two different performance indicators.

PI/559 - Average number of days to clear fly-tipping

- Members asked that a new Performance Indicator be provided on the Percentage of Fly tipping reports which result as prosecution.

PI/907 - Number of successful dog fouling prosecutions including fixed penalty notices.

- Members asked why the result of this performance indicator is so low and why it is not showing as a percentage. Officers explained that enforcement officers need witness dog fouling and it is very difficult to prosecute particular activity. Members requested information in relation to the staff's schedule of activity to have an understanding of the areas that are patrolled.

PI/579 - Percentage of all planning applications determined in time

- It was noted that this particular target had been affected due to staffing levels, officer reassured members that they were in a process of recruitment.

Following scrutiny, it was agreed that report be noted.

Healthy Travel Charter

Information was received on the Healthy Travel Charter and officers explained that plans were in place to improve and update active travel routes, and the active travel map as well as further bids for grant support were also being explored.

Members requested to see the action plan document at a future meeting, and Officers offered Members to have an input into the action plan, by way of a workshop.

Following Scrutiny, the recommendation was supported by the Committee to Cabinet Board.

Christmas Parking 2022

Members received information on Christmas Parking 2022. Members acknowledged that it was important to generate extra business within local shopping centres but felt that the report was only of use to residents who owned a car, rather than those who chose to travel by bus. Members requested that next year (for Christmas 2023) Officers presented some alternative proposals, to include sustainable transport options and subsidised bus travel, as seen in neighbouring Counties, rather than just the one option of free car parking.

It was agreed that Democratic Services would arrange a Task and finish group into Christmas Parking options, combining Members and relevant Officers, in the new year.

The recommendation was supported to the Cabinet Board Task and finish group on Christmas Parking options.

Vehicle and Heavy Plant Fleet Procurement Programme 2023/24

Members were advised on the request to approve procurement of new and replacement vehicles and heavy plant in 2023/24. Along with approval of delegated authority for the relevant Head of Service to replace vehicles from future years 25/26 if any grants become available to assist with the purchase of vehicles, as presented within the report circulated.

Members requested that a report be brought to a future meeting detailing figures in relation to plant fleet procurement and how much the Council is

committed to, this would provide an understanding for members on the costings of tenders when they become apparent.

Following discussions, members felt that zero emissions vehicles should be the main purchase of vehicles to ensure the Council is achieving its environmental targets. Therefore, the following amendment was put forward from Scrutiny Committee for Cabinet Members to consider when making their decision:

- That Members approve the purchase of the zero emission vehicles in the proposed Vehicle/Plant Procurement Programme for 2023/24 set out at appendix a.
- That Delegated Authority be granted to the Head of Service in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Strategic Planning, Transport and Connectivity to purchase any zero emission vehicles in order to maximise the availability of Grant funding that may become available to assist with the purchase cost of the vehicles.
- That the purchase of fossil fuel powered vehicles included in appendix a, and any additional vehicles be subject to further reports to cabinet board for approval, with justification as to why a zero-emission alternative is not able to be purchased.

Following scrutiny, the above amendment was supported to Cabinet Board.

Waste Strategy Action Plan

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

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.

6.0 Investigative Scrutiny

Each year a Scrutiny Committee can undertake a piece of work in more depth on a specific area where they feel they could assist in delivering service improvements.

Waste Strategy Task & Finish Group

Members of the Environment, Regeneration and Streetscene Services Scrutiny Committee undertook a Task and Finish Group to consider and review the Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council's ("the Council") Waste Strategy. The overall purpose of this strategy being to ensure the Council achieves the next statutory recycling target of 70% in 2024/25 and provides an effective service to the public.

The Task and Finish Group met for a one-day workshop session to focus specifically within the Waste Strategy on the 24th February 2023.

The Task and Finish Group held a workshop session to gather all information required to develop recommendations and a summary of the discussions are included within the report.

As well as the Task and Finish group, all members of the Council participated in two All Member Seminars in preparation for the discussions on the Waste Strategy Review.

Following the meeting of the Task and Finish Group the following proposals were put forward to be considered and agreed by Cabinet Board:

Measure 2 - Employ a Recycling Officer (Grade 5) to pursue increased community engagement including schools engagement, produce online & physical educational materials, and to help deal with increasing service demand.

The Task and Finish Group would however wish to suggest that emphasis be provided on the importance of education to the public on the potential new measures and ensuring that leaflets, advertisement and virtual 'how to videos' are provided to the public to ensure engagement and the raising of awareness is achieved.

Measure 3 – To introduce free biodegradable 'dog poo' bags for public use. Bags to be made available for collection in community locations such as Post Offices alongside existing provision of food waste bags

The Task and Finish Group would however wish to suggest that the progress of this measure be reviewed in a year's time to ensure the use of the 'dog poo' bags are achieving its environmental targets within the financial agreements. Also, it be ensured that all wards have access to 'dog poo' bags. In the instances where there are no public amenities, dispensers to be provided.

Measure 5: Changes to Absorbent Hygiene Product Collections

The Task and Finish Group would however wish to suggest that the storage bin be utilised as a 'presentation' bin, with the purple collection sacks be stored within the bin and presented at the location for bin collections as usual for crew to collect the bag from the bin.

Measure 8: Cleaner streets following collections.

The Task and Finish Group would however wish to suggest that officers monitor the improvement of the coordination of the street cleansing following the collections and ensure that this is consistent throughout the County Borough.

Measure 11: Prepare a detailed proposal for 3 weekly refuse collections with 3 bag/existing wheeled bin limit, and conduct formal consultation with the workforce and households. Subject to consultation, finalisation of proposal, and continued sub 70% recycling performance, implement 3 weekly collections in 2024/25 (70% target year). The bulk of the Council's refuse vehicles are due for renewal in 2024/25 and vehicle requirements can be linked in with any change of service provision proposals.

The Task and Finish Group would however wish to suggest that the consultation is not immediately undertaken in 2023/24 and is deferred as long as possible, to enable the other measures to support improved recycling rates and improve the service to be implemented first. This is to avoid unnecessarily consulting on the proposal where it may not be required in the short term, resulting in a distraction from the important communication and education tasks needed to improve recycling in the Borough.

Additional Measures/Recommendations:

The Task and Finish Group would wish to propose the following considerations:

- That the missed collection policy be reviewed and monitored by the Scrutiny Committee
- Measures be taken to ensure that education and correct communication is provided to the public on the expectations of when their missed bin will be collected under the current policy.

- That a rolling programme of public engagement be embarked on by the Waste Service e.g. in the form of regular surveys to the public on their experience of the service.

Following scrutiny at the meeting on the 3rd March 2023 the recommendation of the Task and Finish Group was supported to the Cabinet Board.

Parking Options Review 2023 Task & Finish Group

The Environment, Regeneration and Street Scene Services Scrutiny Committee are the appropriate scrutiny committee for the consideration of the Council's Parking Options Strategy.

The Committee were keen to arrange a Task and Finish Group to consider Christmas parking options.

Officers had completed the Parking Options Report that included Christmas parking arrangements and members felt it was a good idea to review the report in its entirety. Members therefore could look at options for parking and transport solutions to support the vitality of town centres and support sustainable transport with a view to agreeing a set of recommendations for Cabinet Board to consider.

This would help members discharge their pre-scrutiny role and to enable constructive feedback to be provided to the Cabinet Board as they continue to determine matters under Parking Options.

The overarching purpose of the Task and Finish Group was to look at options for parking and transport solutions to support the vitality of town centres and support sustainable transport with a view to agreeing a set of recommendations for Cabinet Board to consider.

The Parking Options Review 2023 Task & Finish Group met three times,

- 28th April 2023
- 10th May 2023
- 18th May 2023

Following productive discussions as a group and with officers, the Task and Finish Group recommended;

1. That members endorse the outcomes of the Task and Finish Group included at Appendix A and commend the same to the Environment, Regeneration and Street scene Cabinet Board.
2. That an invite be extended to the Cabinet Member for Strategic Planning, Transport and Connectivity to the next meeting of this committee to report back on their consideration of the matters that have been put forward.

Following scrutiny at the meeting on the June 2nd, 2023, the recommendation of the Task and Finish Group was supported to the Cabinet Board.

7. Scrutiny Contact Information

The Scrutiny Team are located in the Chief Executive’s Policy and Democratic Services section and their contact details follows:

Name	Position	Contact Details
Charlotte John	Senior Scrutiny and Project Management Officer	E-mail: c.l.davies2@npt.gov.uk Tel: 01639 763745
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Alternatively if you think Scrutiny should consider a certain area or issue as part of their work programme then please e-mail Scrutiny@npt.gov.uk