

No.

ENVIRONMENT AND REGENERATION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of a Remote meeting held on 22nd September, 2020.

The Committee agenda is available [here](#).

Present: Councillor Ms. B.E. Brooks (Chairman); Councillors: V.J. Bailey, Mrs. P. Drake, V.P. Driscoll, G. John, M.J.G. Morgan, A.R. Robertson, L.O. Rowlands, Ms. S. Sivagnanam and S.T. Wiliam.

Also present: Councillor N. Moore (Leader), Councillor L. Burnett (Cabinet Member for Education and Regeneration) and Councillor P.G. King (Cabinet Member for Neighbourhood Services and Transport).

57 ANNOUNCEMENT –

Prior to the commencement of the business of the Committee, the Democratic and Scrutiny Services Officer read the following statement:

“May I remind everyone present that the meeting will be recorded via internet and this recording archived for future viewing.”

58 APPOINTMENT OF VICE-CHAIRMAN –

RESOLVED – T H A T Councillor S. Sivagnanam be appointed Vice-Chairman of the Scrutiny Committee for the remainder of the Municipal Year.

59 MINUTES –

RECOMMENDED – T H A T the minutes of the meeting held on 25th February, 2020 be approved as a correct record.

60 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST –

No declarations were received.

61 PRESENTATION: WORKING TOWARDS RECOVER – SEPTEMBER 2020 –

The Director of Environment and Housing, with support from the relevant Heads of Service, provided a PowerPoint presentation to the Committee which set out the vital work already undertaken by the Council in response to the Covid-19 national pandemic and the transitional corporate approach to recovery going forward under the following headings:

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- Neighbourhood Services and Transport including Waste Management, Garage, Passenger Transport, Engineering, Parks and Cleansing, Enforcement and Alps Reception;
- Regeneration and Planning including Grant Funding, Country Parks, purchasing of PPE, Town Centre Resilience Forums, Regeneration Schemes, Capital Funding, Town Centre Shopping Campaign, hospitality businesses and Creative Rural Communities.

The Director specifically highlighted waste collection rates which remained high during the pandemic, although collections of green waste did cease for a short period at the start of the lockdown. He also issued thanks and appreciation to all staff within the Council for their hard work and dedication and for their continued proactive attitude which had allowed services to adapt in both a fast paced and newer environment.

A Committee Member queried Council actions in response to staff wellbeing and the need to tackle isolation. In reply, the Director advised that one thing the Council had to do was to retrain supervisors for the 21st century. An Agile Workforce Group had been set up headed by the Head of Human Resources to look at employee welfare and performance. The Council needed to ensure that employee policies were geared to the 21st century, but until then supervisors had a key role to contact their staff on a regular basis to ensure wellbeing.

A Committee Member queried whether incidents of fly tipping had increased. In reply, the Head of Neighbourhood Services and Transport stated that initially there had been issues due to waste recycling centres being closed but since they had reopened there had been a steady drop off in fly tipping. The Council was also proactive in investigating incidents and trying to identify culprits.

Regarding progress on the development of the toilet block on Barry Island, the Head of Regeneration and Planning advised that this a complex development as it was a listed building. A number of planning applications had been in for some time and these had to satisfy certain conditions from CADW and the Council.

A Committee Member queried the process for businesses applying for grant relief during the pandemic, stating that he had been contacted by a business in Sully who had been refused support and had indicated a lack of response by the Council. In reply, the Head of Regeneration and Planning stated that the grant application process came from Welsh Government very quickly overnight, and so the Council had to develop a system very quickly. The process allowed for grant payments of between £10k and £25k, and over the course of the pandemic the Council had issued £27m of grant money. A process was developed jointly with Council Tax to pick up and contact approximately 1600 businesses which were thought to be eligible. Some businesses did not have the correct details with the Council Tax Department, for example had changed their name or address. The Council had therefore also developed a website contact page so that businesses had all the necessary information in order to submit an application. An email in box had been devised for incoming emails, which became overloaded very quickly and so there was a weekend when the inbox stopped taking messages. As a result, the Planning Department in conjunction with I.C.T. had tried to identify all the emails that had

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bounced back to try and contact everyone involved. The Council overall, had also received a low number of complaints, which mostly came from those who had their application refused based on eligibility criteria set by Welsh Government. The Head of Regeneration and Planning advised that it was his belief that all businesses that were eligible had received a grant payment.

In reply to a query regarding both the environmental and financial impact during lockdown, the Head of Neighbourhood Services and Transport stated that a 70% recycling rate during the first quarter of 2020/21 was a significant achievement. Although the Council had increased the number of black bags collected from two to four, most people had still only put out two bags. The Council was also in the process of preparing a communications campaign in respect of source separation of recycling which would be rolled out during October. In terms of the financial implications, the Principal Account stated that the main cost of collecting waste was because of the need for social distancing for staff and the resultant use of pool cars for certain loading staff at the height of the pandemic. He added that the cost of treating separated waste was less than the cost paid by the Council to treat its co-mingled recycling, so there should be processing savings going forward. There had also been an increase in cost as a result of certain staff needing to shield from the illness and this was on top of the costs due to the need to adhere to working practices around social distancing. He confirmed that the Council had reclaimed the majority of costs associated with this from Welsh Government.

With regard to support available to the hospitality sector, work was being undertaken by Roberts Limbrick Ltd, the Head of Regeneration and Planning stated that the Council had a pot of money that had to be spent by the end of March 2021, and so they had been asked to look at more longer term recovery measures that went beyond that date. Actions would be split into medium and longer term, but the Council would look to support businesses as much as it could.

A Committee Member queried whether the Council could continue as business as usual without the need to use the Managing Director's Emergency Powers. The Council Leader, with permission to speak, stated probably not, but this would depend on the severity of any second wave. During the pandemic, and due to the pace of developments the Council had no option but to take immediate decisions.

Overall, the Committee shared the appreciation expressed by the Director and the Committee was keen for its thanks to be passed on to all staff.

Subsequently, it was

RECOMMENDED – T H A T the thanks and appreciation of the Committee be passed on to all staff for their hard work and dedication.

Reason for recommendation

To pass on the Committee's thanks and appreciation.

62 ANNUAL DELIVERY PLAN MONITORING REPORT QUARTER 1
PERFORMANCE 2020/21 (MD) –

The Director of Environment and Housing presented the report, the purpose of which was to present Quarter 1 performance results for the period 1st April to 30th June, 2020 in delivering the Council's Annual Delivery Plan commitments as aligned to its Corporate Plan Well-being Objectives.

The Director advised that despite the significant challenges of responding to the Covid-19 pandemic, which was at its height during the first quarter period, positive progress had been made in delivering the in-year commitments in relation to the Annual Delivery Plan.

Progress had therefore contributed to an overall Amber status to the Plan at Quarter 1. 65% (149 out of 228) of planned activities outlined in the Council's Annual Delivery Plan had been attributed a Green status reflecting the positive progress made during the quarter. 20% (47) of planned activities were attributed a Red status.

Of the 47 actions attributed a Red performance status during the quarter, 70% (33) were directly as a result of service reprioritisation measures undertaken in response to the impact of the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic. In relation to these areas, where appropriate, work was now recommencing alongside service reviews which would inform the Council's recovery planning and strategy going forward. Progress in relation to this would be reported during Quarter 2.

Of the 43 quarterly performance measures aligned to the Council's Corporate Plan Well-being Objectives, data was reported for 34 measures where a performance status was applicable. 70% (24) measures were attributed a Green performance Status, 3% (1) an Amber status and 27% (9) a Red status. Data was unavailable for 9 quarterly measures due to reprioritisation measures undertaken in response to the impact of the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic. A performance status was not applicable for 121 measures including a number of annual indicators (104) and those establishing baseline performance for the year (8).

In relation to the 9 measures attributed a Red performance status during the quarter, the impact of Covid-19 had contributed to missing target.

A detailed report outlining the progress made this quarter towards achieving the Council's Annual Delivery Plan commitments was provided at Appendix A to the report.

In response to a number of queries raised by a Member of the Committee, the Director stated that information relating to the number of Covid cases among Vale staff would be reported back. Regarding future home working, it was fair to say that most staff would be able continue this if it was in the interests of the business. In addition, the Head of Neighbourhood Services and Transport clarified that in for the cycleway on Plassey Street in Penarth, the Council was about to start its work on its Active Travel maps which would include cycling and walking routes, and these would be reviewed, and any missing links would need to be identified through that process.

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Local residents who felt that there were missing links would be able to contribute as part of the process. Hopefully, the Council would then be able to put together a comprehensive Active Travel map highlighting all the routes.

A Committee Member asked for more information relating to action ADP40 relating to a new interchange at Barry Dock. In reply, the Head of Neighbourhood Services and Transport stated that this would be part of a WeITAG study for an interchange and new bus station at the Docks Office. This would be the subject of a report to be presented to Cabinet.

In regard to the flood elevation scheme at Llanmaes, the Director stated that this was the responsibility of the Vale Council and not Natural Resources Wales as this was not a main river scheme.

Subsequently, it was

RECOMMENDED –

(1) T H A T the performance results and progress towards achieving the Annual Delivery Plan 2020/21 commitments as aligned to the Council's Corporate Plan Well-being Objectives within the remit of the Environment and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee, be noted.

(2) T H A T the remedial actions taken to address areas of underperformance and to tackle the key challenges identified within the remit of the Environment and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee be noted.

Reasons for recommendations

(1) To ensure the Council clearly demonstrates the progress being made towards achieving its commitments in the Annual Delivery Plan 2020/21 aimed at making a positive difference to the lives of Vale of Glamorgan citizens.

(2) To ensure the Council is effectively assessing its performance in line with the requirement to secure continuous improvement as outlined in the Local Government Measure (Wales) 2009 and reflecting the requirements of the Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 that it maximises its contribution to achieving the well-being goals for Wales.

63 REVENUE AND CAPITAL MONITORING FOR THE PERIOD 1ST APRIL TO 31ST JULY 2020 (DEH) –

The Principal Accountant presented the report, the purpose of which was to advise the Scrutiny Committee of the progress relating to revenue and capital expenditure for the period 1st April to 31st July, 2020.

Members noted that the service was anticipating an adverse variance by year end.

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Neighbourhood Services and Transport was currently projected to have an adverse variance of £600k against the 2020/21 budget. Funding for budget pressures of £1.25m had been provided as part of the 2020/21 budget setting process, however, there remained considerable pressure on the budget.

Waste Collection Service – The service was anticipating an adverse variance of around £850k by year end. There still remained continued pressure on employee and transport budgets due to downtime involved in travelling to Cardiff to dispose of waste. However this would reduce once the waste transfer station was operational which was due to take place during 2021/22. Staffing numbers had been increased to enable the maintenance of the service through the Covid-19 pandemic and to be able to observe social distancing. This increased cost was, however, being claimed against the Welsh Government (WG) Hardship grant. A temporary additional 10% uplift in salary had also been provided to frontline staff in this area to acknowledge the difficulties they faced and as previously stated this was not being funded by WG. This uplift had been approved for the period from April to the end of August 2020 and would cost the service around £175k. There was also a decrease in the Waste Grant from WG for 2020/21 which funded part of the recycling collection service. Preparations were still ongoing to enable the full rollout of a kerbside sort method of recycling. It was anticipated that the next phase of the recycling rollout would be in Barry during October 2020. This would ensure that the majority of recycling was delivered to UK markets rather than being sent abroad and would further reduce the costs currently being spent on treating recycling as the Council would get an income for the majority of recycling it collected rather than paying for the treatment of its co-mingled recycling. Currently, there remained pressure on the budget due to the high price being paid to treat co-mingled recycling. The price had increased steadily over the last couple of years since China banned elements of recycling such as plastic into the country. This had been compounded by a high percentage of dry recycling collected since May 2019 being rejected by the new contractor. It was estimated that these factors had added an additional £200k pressure to the budget, however, this should improve as a result of the full rollout of a kerbside sort method of recycling. To offset the pressures above there were savings on vacant posts elsewhere in the service of around £450k. The additional costs of £175k relating to the additional 10% paid to frontline staff would be funded centrally from monies set aside at the end of 2019/20 in the Council Fund in order to meet any potential additional costs relating to the Covid-19 pandemic. The remaining £425k would be funded from the Neighbourhood Services reserve.

Building Services – The Building Maintenance service was currently running at a significant deficit due to the decrease in level of work being undertaken as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic. The majority of work undertaken by Building Maintenance was within public buildings or Council houses and therefore the level of work had reduced significantly. It was estimated that the trading unit was losing around £25k per week as the Building Maintenance operatives were unable to recover all of their costs from undertaking work. Around 1,000 chargeable hours were undertaken per week in 2019/20, this had reduced to around 300 hours per week in the first three months of 2020/21. The net impact was a deficit of £303k on work that would have been undertaken on housing and £147k from public buildings which was a total of £450k. As the lockdown eases it was anticipated that routine work would slowly recommence and more chargeable time could be booked to jobs, however it was

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extremely unlikely that the adverse position would be recovered and any year end adverse variance would need to be funded from the Council Fund.

As part of the Final Revenue Budget Proposals for 2020/21, an efficiency target of £83k was set for the Committee. Attached at Appendix 1 to the report was a statement detailing all efficiency targets for 2020/21 and it was anticipated that this would be achieved in full by year end.

Appendix 2 to the report detailed financial progress on the Capital Programme as at 31st July, 2020. Members should be aware that Appendix 2 included requests for unspent committed expenditure to be slipped from the 2019/20 Capital Programme into 2020/21 as approved by Emergency Powers on 23rd July, 2020.

Having considered the report, it was

RECOMMENDED – T H A T the position with regard to the 2020/21 revenue and capital budget be noted.

Reason for recommendation

That Members are aware of the projected revenue outturn for 2020/21.

64 UPDATED WORK PROGRAMME SCHEDULE 2020/21 (DEH) –

The Democratic and Scrutiny Services Officer presented the report which provided an update on the Scrutiny Committee' Work Programme Schedule for 2020/21.

The suggested Work Programme Schedule for the current Municipal year was attached at Appendix A. Attached at Appendix B was a list of Emergency Powers used by the Managing Director in response to the Covid-19 pandemic.

Having considered the report, it was

RECOMMENDED –

(1) T H A T the updated Work Programme Schedule attached at Appendix A to the report be approved and uploaded to the Council's website.

(2) T H A T the Emergency Power decisions taken during the national lockdown at Appendix B to the report be noted.

Reason for recommendations

(1&2) For information.