

SHARED REGULATORY SERVICES JOINT COMMITTEE

Minutes of a meeting held on 26th February, 2019.

Present:

Representing Bridgend County Borough Council: Councillors Ms. D. Patel and D. Lewis.

Representing Cardiff City and County Council: Councillors M. Michael (Chairman) and Ms. N. Mackie.

Representing the Vale of Glamorgan Council: Councillors V.P. Driscoll and T.H. Jarvie (Vice-Chairman).

(a) Minutes -

RESOLVED - T H A T the minutes of the meeting held on 18th December, 2018 be approved as a correct record.

(b) Declarations of Interest -

No declarations were received.

(c) Overview and Update on Shared Regulatory Services -

In presenting the report, the Director of Environment and Housing advised that the report detailed the work of the Service and the progress towards completing the SRS Business Plans. It was noted that SRS Business Plans were developed in consultation with stakeholders and that they inform and direct the work of the Service and contribute towards the corporate priorities of each partner Councils.

At Section 4 of the report referred to key issues for consideration under the following headings:

- Human Resources
- Financial Position Quarter 1
- Performance Monitoring
- Service Updates
- New Ways of Working
- Annual Health and Welfare
- Enforcement Activity.

Following the presentation by the Director the Chairman, in referring to the ongoing difficulties in recruitment to professional grades as outlined within the report, queried progress and the intention for the service to grow its own officers and specifically mentioned working with Cardiff and the Vale College. The Operational Manager for Shared Regulatory Services Managerial advised that she had been tasked to have discussions with Cardiff Metropolitan University and the UWE in Bristol. Discussion had also taken place with Welsh Government with regard to the implementation of

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the Regulatory Compliance Officer apprenticeship and the possibility of developing an apprenticeship scheme that was fit for purpose in Wales. The Operational Manager for Neighbourhood Services stated that a number of staff in his service area were being up-skilled to help address more quickly the current staff shortages in key areas. Officers were asked to have due regard to Bridgend College and consider them in any discussions with regard to apprenticeships.

Having regard to the number of posts that were currently vacant across the Service, the Director stated that he did not have that information to hand but would provide this to Members as soon as possible, it being noted that a number of vacancies were also currently being advertised.

In considering the performance data on dealing with noise and air pollution complaints, a Member queried whether Welsh Government would be instructing an Environmental Impact Assessment of the Biomass Plant. The Operational Manager stated that while SRS would respond to complaints about noise and smoke the regulator of the plant was itself Natural Resources Wales. The Member, however, sought confirmation that the SRS department would monitor air quality in the area. It was noted that 2 real-time air quality monitors had been installed in Barry in the vicinity of the site and these were providing background data on air quality prior to the Biomass Plant commencing operations. The residents would also be able to view the results recorded by the monitors via a link to the SRS website.

Having regard to let accommodation survey, following a query from a Member as to whether the survey included Airbnb properties, Committee was informed that these had not been included on this occasion but that the officer would check to see if complaints had been received to justify the type of property lets being included in future project work.

Having regard to Animal Health and Welfare and the new Welsh Government Framework and Equine Identification Wales Regulations officers responded to a query as to whether the SRS Service was receiving sufficient information and complaints to support the intelligence led approach to compliance particularly in relation to animal health and welfare. Members were advised that information was received from a variety of sources including the Citizens Advice Consumer Service as well as direct to the service. It had also been noted that with specific regard to animal health and welfare, the service was experiencing a spike in intelligence reports to date.

In referring to enforcement activities, particular reference was made to cases highlighted in paragraphs 1, 4, 7, 9, 12 and 13 as being of particular interest. The Chairman took the opportunity on behalf of the Joint Committee to thank all the teams in the SRS service for their hard work in bringing such cases to court.

It was subsequently

RESOLVED - T H A T the contents of the report be noted and agreed.

Reason for decision

To apprise the Committee of the work of the Service and the progress towards completing the Shared Regulatory Services Business Plans.

(d) Welsh Government Consultation on Improving Public Transport -

The Operational Manager for Neighbourhood Services in commencing the presentation noted that Welsh Government was consulting until 27th March, 2019 on options to modernise and streamline the frameworks supporting public transport services in Wales. The consultation paper considered bus services in Part 1 and taxi and private hire vehicles in Part 2. It recommended the following in respect of taxis and private hire licensing:

- The setting of national standards for drivers and vehicles
- Enhanced enforcement provisions for authorised officers within any local authority area (not just the area where a driver / vehicle is licensed)
- Enhanced arrangements for information sharing, including the creation of a national database of drivers, operators and dispatchers.

The consultation paper also set out two options:

Option A – “the bullet points above are adopted with a Joint Transport Authority becoming the single licensing authority for Wales by taking on the taxi licensing functions currently undertaken by the 22 Welsh local authorities. This would have implications for those staff within SRS currently engaged in taxi licensing work

Option B – the bullet points above are adopted but Welsh local authorities retain their current taxi licensing responsibilities around fee and fare setting, enforcement, hearing appeals etc.”

The SRS Department would be pulling together individual consultation responses on behalf of the three Licensing Authorities.

Members questioned the effectiveness of centralising taxi licensing into a single licensing authority and the loss of local knowledge and understanding that would bring. In expressing its concern over the proposed centralisation envisaged in *Option A*, the Joint Committee asked that its support for *Option B* be noted.

RESOLVED -

(1) T H A T the contents of the report be noted.

(2) T H A T this matter be raised by way of an information report to the Vale of Glamorgan’s Cabinet.

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Reason for decision

(1) To provide the Committee with information on developments for public transport in Wales.

(2) The Vale of Glamorgan is the host employer for the Shared Regulatory Service and there is potential for redundancies should a new Joint Transport Authority be created.

(e) 2019 Audit Plan - Shared Regulatory Services -

Gareth Rees, Wales Audit Office presented this report and explained that the WAO approach was similar to the previous year in terms of objectives. He took the Joint Committee through the appended Audit Plan and highlighted in particular Exhibit 1 of the Plan (the audit approach) and Exhibit 2 (financial audit risks).

Councillor Patel asked for clarification on categorisation of risks and how they could be mitigated against. Gareth Rees explained that this would be decided on the basis of whether the risks identified are significant or not. He also stressed the importance of understanding the impact of the new accounting standards (IFRS 9 and IFRS 15) which will be in use.

RESOLVED - T H A T the contents of the report be noted.

Reason for decision

To facilitate monitoring of the audit function.