

No.

ENVIRONMENT AND REGENERATION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of a Remote meeting held on 21st September, 2021.

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

The Meeting recording is available [here](#).

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

Also Present: Councillors P.G. King (Cabinet Member for Neighbourhood Services and Transport) and E. Williams (Cabinet Member for Legal, Regulatory and Planning Services).

377 ANNOUNCEMENT –

Prior to the commencement of the business of the Committee, the Chairman read the following statement: “May I remind everyone present that the meeting will be live streamed as well as recorded via the internet and this recording archived for future viewing.”

378 APOLOGY FOR ABSENCE –

This was received from Councillor G. John.

379 MINUTES –

RECOMMENDED – T H A T the minutes of the meeting held on 13th July, 2021 be approved as a correct record.

380 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST –

Councillor Driscoll declared an interest in respect of Agenda Item 5 – Vale of Glamorgan Local Development Plan 2011-2026: Annual Monitoring Report 2020/2021 – Cabinet: 13th September, 2021. The nature of the interest was that Councillor Driscoll owned several properties located on Holton Road. The nature of report meant that Councillor Driscoll remained present during discussions on this item.

No.

381 ACTIVE TRAVEL NETWORK – STATUTORY CONSULTATION PROCESS (REF) –

The Head of Neighbourhood Services and Transport presented the reference from Cabinet of 19th July, 2021.

The report outlined that the Active Travel (Wales) Act 2013 placed duties upon local authorities in Wales to map, plan for, improve and promote opportunities for Active Travel. Initial Active Travel Network Maps (ATNM's) were approved by Welsh Government (WG) in November 2017 and updated ATNMs must be submitted to WG every three years. Current maps for the Vale of Glamorgan were available on the Council's website (Active Travel -valeofglamorgan.gov.uk).

The deadline for submission of the updated ATNMs was originally 27th February 2021, but due to Covid-19 this was extended by WG until 31st December 2021.

The settlements identified in the Vale of Glamorgan Active Travel area by WG included, Barry, Cowbridge, Dinas Powys, Llantwit Major, Penarth, Rhoose, St Athan and Sully.

The report advised that the criteria that Active Travel routes must meet were extremely high and did not reflect the Council's own maintenance standards, or that of the standards that Councils were legally bound to consider when carrying out risk assessments on walked routes to schools. Therefore, a route that was deemed available was an appropriate route to school, in accordance with the Learner Travel Wales Measure, may not meet the criteria as an Active Travel route. Likewise, the Council had its own standards for roads or footways when deciding whether it required maintenance works to be carried out. Hence, the routes for Active Travel reflected WG's aspirations for providing new facilities but were all heavily dependent on available funding to deliver such routes.

The routes were assessed using a scoring mechanism and there may be exception statements that could be used to allow a route to be an Active Travel route without it meeting all the criteria in the guidance. It was reported that each route must be assessed separately, which was judged as a long and resource intensive process. The scoring pass rate to enable a route to be considered an Active travel route for both walking and cycling, was 70%.

The ATNMs were a comprehensive plan. They included routes that were currently used but may not meet the standard of Active Travel routes, or they could be routes that did not currently exist but that had been identified within other strategic plans or had been identified through the consultation process.

The Committee noted that WG had allocated funding of £2.5m to progress Active Travel schemes for the current financial year.

Councillor R. Sivagnanam commented on some of the feedback she had received from local residents in Penarth which were around the steep gradients and unsuitability of some paths. She also wanted to raise the safety issues around the connection between Windsor Road and the link to Cogan. Councillor Sivagnanam

No.

also referred to streets in Penarth such as Plassey Street, where the trees had been removed because they had caused damage to the pavement or road. Some of the paved areas also contained slippery stone which needed to be looked in to. She added that where the trees had been removed there had not been any indication whether the right sort of tree would be planted, and which did not cause the same sort of issues. The replanting of trees was important in terms of the street scene. In response, the Head of Neighbourhood Services and Transport stated that for feedback it was important for comments to be fed into the consultation portal as it would allow members of the public to express a like or dislike of what had been written. She added that in terms of trees, this was something that would often be raised, but there was a balance between safety and the street scene. The Council was replanting trees, but these would not always be in the same location to the trees that had been removed. This work was something that would be covered within the Council's Tree Strategy, which would look at tree coverage across the whole of the Vale and was due for completion early next year.

Councillor L.O. Rowlands stated that it appeared that certain cycle lanes were infrequently used referring to comments he had received from cyclists that material on lanes caused damage to wheels and tyres. He therefore asked whether more could be done to encourage cyclists to use cycle lanes. The Head of Neighbourhood Services and Transport commented that the Council would ensure that cycle lanes were properly maintained to high standards for the issues of road safety. It was recognised that the best way to encourage cycling was to have dedicated lanes with the best examples of these probably on 5 Mile Lane and Port Road. However, it was also recognised that some cyclists had a personal preference to use roads as opposed to dedicated cycle lanes. She agreed that information regarding the number of cyclists using routes and lanes would be shared with the Members.

Councillor A.R. Robertson queried whether some of the routes on the map for Dinas Powys were already in existence and whether that meant there would not be any traffic. In reply, the Head of Neighbourhood Services and Transport advised that for Dinas Powys there were a number of future Active Travel routes proposed that would be brought up to a higher standard. These were not exclusively for walkers or cyclists and improvements would usually mean the widening of pavements or the development of cycling facilities. There were also some routes such as St. Andrews where physical restraints limited the work that could be carried out.

In terms of overall costs, the Head of Neighbourhood Services and Transport confirmed that the Council had received an initial amount of £2.5m to develop routes. Funding to deliver projects would be determined as part of the next phase.

Councillor M.G.J. Morgan commented from the rural perspective of the Active Travel network which appeared to be mainly concentrated in town areas. He referred to safety on rural roads and the unsuitability of parts of the rural network which made passing cyclists and horse riders dangerous. This problem was made more dangerous by the speeds that some drivers drove. Councillor Morgan therefore asked if something could be done to address these issues, and he suggested that the 60mph speed limit for single track country lanes should be reduced.

No.

Scrutiny Committee, having considered the reference

RECOMMENDED – T H A T the views of the Scrutiny Committee be submitted as part of the consultation process and the views also referred to Cabinet for its consideration. The views being:

- To highlight safety issues that required the removal of trees which caused damage to pavements and cycle lanes. To also highlight the importance that trees had on the street scenes of towns, so a strategy was needed to ensure that the right sort of tree was planted which did not cause damage to pavements / cycle lanes etc.;
- For there to be a more holistic approach for the promotion of Active Travel to encourage greater use of cycle lanes;
- The Scrutiny Committee strongly supported the Active Travel improvements proposed for the A4055 between Barry and Dinas Powys;
- As a way to encourage walking and cycling in rural areas, there should be a campaign to reduce the speed limits on rural roads and lanes;
- The Scrutiny Committee wished to emphasize the importance for projects to be delivered successfully post consultation to make positive improvement to communities.

Reason for recommendation

To allow the views of the Scrutiny Committee to be fed into the consultation activity and to ensure that Cabinet are aware of those views.

382 VALE OF GLAMORGAN LOCAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN 2011-2025: ANNUAL MONITORING REPORT 2020/2021 (REF) –

The Head of Regeneration and Planning presented the reference from Cabinet of 13th September, 2021 as contained within the agenda.

It was reported that this related to the third Local Development Plan (LDP) Annual Monitoring Report (AMR) which assessed the performance of the policies in achieving the integrated Plan objectives which incorporate sustainable development and Strategic Environmental Assessment having regard to the Monitoring Framework set out in the LDP and agreed by the Inspector as part of the LDP Examination and consequently adopted by the Council on 28th June 2017.

The format of the AMR followed the suggested format set out in the latest Development Plans Manual. It included both core and local monitoring indicators and a 'traffic light' rating system used as a visual aid to monitor the effectiveness of the Plan's policies and to provide a quick overview of policy performance.

The report sets out the key policy achievements to date and confirmed that the majority of relevant monitoring targets have been met. It highlighted the indicators where further research / investigation was required and noted that COVID-19 had delayed the progression of some Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) and member training in relation to Policy MD1 as recommended in the previous AMR.

No.

Overall, it was reported that the AMR showed that good progress was being made in implementing the majority of the Plan's policies and that the LDP strategy remained sound. Accordingly, it was recommended to Cabinet that the third AMR be submitted to the Welsh Government by 31st October 2021 and published on the Council's website in accordance with LDP Regulation 37. In addition, it noted that the Council had commenced a review of the LDP in line with LDP Regulation 41 and recommended to Cabinet that work commenced on a replacement LDP following approval of a new Delivery Agreement by the Welsh Government.

Councillor L.O. Rowlands commented on whether there was more flexibility in the system regarding multi-use/occupancy business units, especially at a time when small businesses were struggling to pay their business rates. The Head of Regeneration and Planning stated that the Council regularly worked with landlords and businesses around sub dividing premises and it was very keen to promote mixed uses. The current trend had seen a growth in office space and leisure related businesses, so the Council had been flexible in reacting to market trends. He added that there was a lot of work being undertaken to tackle the issue of empty properties, but it was important to recognise that Holton Road in Barry was doing well when compared to other town centre areas across Wales.

Councillor A.R. Robertson queried changes in the way that Local Planning Authorities monitored the deliverability of housing and the availability of land for residential purposes. The measures included the revocation of TAN 1 Housing Land Availability Studies (2015) and the need for Local Planning Authorities to undertake annual Joint Housing Land Availability Studies. He also queried whether the Council now had more autonomy in terms of setting housing requirements for the Vale of Glamorgan. In reply, the Head of Regeneration and Planning stated that previously when a Housing Monitoring Review was undertaken, Councils had to ensure that there was a 5-year housing supply, if it did not then it was open to developers coming in and making planning applications which essentially meant that for Councils, sites could be forced upon them. The current LDP included a total housing figure of around 9600, and there was now an annual review of the LDP to assess whether the Council was on track to meet its overall target (9600 homes).

The Head of Regeneration and Planning further advised that in terms of autonomy and new housing developments, Councils were now required to work on a regional basis. This meant that Welsh Government was keen for there to be more development in areas north of the M4 corridor. Councils were expected to work together to provide houses in areas that required economic stimulation. Therefore, the Vale of Glamorgan was likely to have less housing developments than an area such as Rhondda Cynon Taff. He added that Welsh Government would be required to approve the Vale's new LDP, but overall, the new approach would be fairer, as the Vale of Glamorgan had already accommodated over 9000 homes, so there would be a focus on developments in other areas. This regional work would also encompass work being undertaken by the Cardiff City Deal.

Councillor V.J. Bailey commented that there would likely to be pressure from neighbouring areas regarding new housing developments in the Vale. He considered that it would be difficult to attract developers to valley areas as the

No.

financial returns were less when compared to building new homes in the Vale. He therefore issued a word of caution regarding developers keen to progress projects on green spaces in the Vale, so it was important for the Council to be strong in making its position clear. In reply, the Head of Regeneration and Planning stated that there had been a significant change to the way that housing figures were worked out. New housing developments were seen as a major part of economic regeneration particularly for those areas that had faced economic decline. It was also important to consider that Welsh Government was keen to increase the number of small and medium sized housing developers across Wales, which was regarded as a way to increase the market for smaller sized developments.

Councillor M.G.J. Morgan queried whether the issues around new retirement homes could be dealt with via a new LDP. The Head of Regeneration and Planning stated that this was more for national policies specific to Welsh Government. Planning Policy Wales had touched upon some of the issues, but this did not contain sufficient detail so further discussions were ongoing. Therefore, it was hoped that further changes would be forthcoming.

Councillor S. Sivagnanam queried support provided to those businesses struggling to recruit staff during the Covid-19 pandemic. She also referred to Welsh Government proposals to create high street 'hubs', places where people could hot-desk and she queried the work being undertaken with Welsh Government. The Head of Regeneration and Planning advised that in terms of the LDP all it could do was regulate, but the Council had been as flexible as it could. In terms of regeneration, the Council had officers working with and providing support to businesses, and advice was available on how to access grant monies. Issues such as recruitment and the impact because of Brexit, across a number of economic sectors, was being monitored. Regarding hubs and working with Welsh Government, he confirmed that meetings had already taken place to assess where the hubs could be developed. At present this work was focussed on Barry, but it was hoped for it to be extended to other towns.

Councillor S.T. Wiliam queried the current trend around people returning to work/offices. In response, the Head of Regeneration and Planning advised that workers had largely returned to their office, but their work pattern would be different with less time spent at their place of work. We were likely to see a change to the way that office buildings were used with more use of shared/collaborative working spaces.

Scrutiny Committee, subsequently

RECOMMENDED – T H A T the third Local Development Plan (LDP) Annual Monitoring Report (AMR) be endorsed.

Reason for recommendation

Having regard to the contents of the report and discussions at the meeting.

No.

383 ANNUAL DELIVERY PLAN MONITORING REPORT: QUARTER 1 PERFORMANCE 2021/22 (MD) –

The performance report presented the Council's progress at Quarter 1 (1st April to 30th June 2021) towards achieving its Annual Delivery Plan (2021/22) commitments as aligned to its Corporate Plan Well-being Objectives.

The Council had made positive progress in delivering its in-year commitments in relation to its Annual Delivery Plan (2021/22). This performance had contributed to an overall Green status for the Plan at Quarter 1 (Q1).

All 4 Corporate Plan Well-being Objectives were attributed a Green performance status at Q1 to reflect the progress made to date. This was positive given the ongoing challenges arising from the pandemic.

97% (306 out of 315) of planned activities outlined in the Council's Annual Delivery Plan had been attributed a Green performance reflecting the positive progress made during the quarter, 1% (2) an Amber status and 2% (7) of planned activities were attributed a Red status.

Of the 7 actions attributed a Red performance status during the quarter, 29% (2) 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 as part of the Council's recovery plans and strategy. Progress in relation to Coronavirus recovery was being reported to Members in the presentation accompanying this performance report at Scrutiny Committee and focused on highlighting issues pertinent to the Committee's remit. The Coronavirus Recovery Update formed part of quarterly performance reporting to ensure Members maintained an oversight of the recovery issues impacting on the work of their respective Committees. From this perspective, Members were requested to note the progress to date in relation to Coronavirus recovery.

Of the 42 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. 50% (17) measures were attributed a Green performance Status, 17% (6) an Amber status and 33% (11) a Red status. Data was unavailable for 8 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 107 measures including a number of annual indicators (89) and those establishing baseline performance for the year (18).

In relation to the 11 measures attributed a Red performance status during the quarter, the impact of COVID-19 had contributed to 54% (6) missing target.

In relation to the planned activities within the remit of the Environment and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee, 97% (97 out of 100) were attributed a Green performance status, 0 Amber status and 3% (3) Red status. Of the 3 attributed a Red performance status, the impact of COVID-19 was identified as a contributory factor in the reported slippage. Of the 8 quarterly measures reported, 63% (5) were

No.

attributed a Green performance status, 12% (1) Amber status, and 25% (2) Red status.

The report sought elected Members' consideration of Q1 performance results and the proposed remedial actions to address areas of identified underperformance. Upon consideration, the Scrutiny Committee was recommended to refer their views and any recommendations to Cabinet for their consideration.

The Committee having considered the report

RECOMMENDED –

(1) T H A T the performance results and progress towards achieving the Annual Delivery Plan 2021/22 commitments as aligned to the Council's Corporate Plan Wellbeing Objectives within the remit of the Committee be noted.

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

(3) T H A T the progress being made through the Council's Recovery Strategy and Directorate Recovery Plans in response to the ongoing Coronavirus pandemic be noted.

Reasons for recommendations

(1&2) Having regard to the contents of the report and discussions at the meeting.

(3) To ensure Members maintain an oversight of the recovery issues impacting on the work of the Council and their respective Scrutiny Committee.