

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE PLACE COMMITTEE HELD AT COMMITTEE ROOM A - COUNTY HALL, LLANDRINDOD WELLS, POWYS ON FRIDAY, 2 OCTOBER 2015

PRESENT

County Councillor R G Thomas (Chair)

County Councillors K W Curry, D O Evans, V E Evans, D C Jones, H Lewis, D H Williams and S L Williams

Officers: Paul Griffiths, Strategic Director, Place, Nigel Brinn, Head of Highways, Transport and Recycling and Leigh Williams, Street Lighting Operations Manager

1.	APOLOGIES	PLSC12-2015
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Apologies for absence were received from County Councillors M Dorrance, G G Hopkins, R Mills, G Morgan, D Price, G Price and K Silk.

It was noted that Professor Roffe had resigned from the Committee.

2.	DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST	PLSC13-2015
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There were no declarations of interest.

3.	DISCLOSURES OF PARTY WHIPS	PLSC14-2015
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There were no disclosures of party whips.

4.	MINUTES	PLSC15-2015
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The Chair was authorised to sign the minutes of the last meeting, held on 18 June 2015, as a correct record.

5.	HIGHWAYS, TRANSPORTATION AND RECYCLING	PLSC16-2015
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The Head of Service provided an overview of the service – copies of the presentation were circulated after the meeting and are filed with the signed Minutes.

Issues raised:

- Relationship between the County Council, Welsh Government and Trunk Road Agency (TRA) – there appeared to be some difficulty in communication between the parties with a reluctance on the part of the Minister in dealing with County Councillors. There have been recent initiatives with community councils but the process appears to be truncated with a lack of strategic overview

- The Audit Committee had been informed that there were outstanding invoices unpaid by the Trunk Road Agency – the Head of Service confirmed that outstanding invoices had now been paid. The process had been easier when Powys had the TRA – there had been some issues in dealing with queries retrospectively and it was essential that appropriate processes were in place.
- What is the relationship between the Authority and Natural Resources Wales (NRW) – NRW have responsibility for main rivers and the Authority responsibility for ordinary water courses. NRW will be a statutory partner of the Public Service Board (PSB). The PSB will take over from the Local Service Board (LSB) next year. There is both a consultative and legislative relationship between PSB and the Authority and this relationship can be further developed.
- The Committee noted that the service faced a 53% cut in net controllable budget and had concerns regarding managing expectation of both Members and the general public. There would, inevitably, be changes in the way services would be delivered. Members were of the opinion that officers must ensure that the public are given an honest assessment of what can be achieved at the first point of contact.
- There was a further threat that a grant in relation to waste could be halved which may result, in a worst case scenario, of nearly £2M further reduction in the budget
- It was hoped that the Scrutiny Committee would review the various approaches to budget reduction at every stage to ensure issues were being addressed strategically.
- Community delivery – there seem to be issues with consistency across the authority. Concurrent Functions may be withdrawn from the north to work towards parity across the Authority. In the initial stages of Community Delivery it was anticipated that up to 50% funding could be provided to Town and Community councils to support service transfer. Under current financial constraints this figure was likely to reduce.
- Members had heard that the depot at Penybont may be under threat and sought clarification. Currently the workshop located at the site was not fit for purpose and, as a short term measure, work would be divided north and south. There are ongoing discussions regarding the future development of the site with other partners and it may be that becomes more specialised subject to a robust business case being provided.
- Winter maintenance – currently it was not possible to deliver 24 hr fleet support service for winter maintenance in the mid area of the County due to contractual arrangements with support staff. Traditionally gritting lorries were multi-purpose but these had not always been used effectively. It was now more cost effective to hire gritting lorries for the winter season only.
- There is an inventory of all equipment and whilst levels of confidence were high that all large equipment was itemised, there was not quite the same level of confidence that all smaller items (hand held tools) were included. This was the responsibility of Area Managers.

County Councillor D O Evans left the meeting at 11.05 am.

- Members asked that they be kept informed of the depot review. It was noted that there would be fewer sites in the future. The Head of Service

had visited depots and asked that any member of staff contact him with concerns. However, there seemed to be a high level of misinformation circulating amongst some staff.

- Every option would be considered to deliver an effective service – robust business cases would be produced
- The local Member welcomed the Authority's co-operation with regard to street lighting which led to the Elan Valley being designated an official Dark Skies area. There seemed to be a move to switch streetlights back on once LED lights had been installed. Some residents request that lights be switched off but this would depend on the area and consultation with other residents. A number of options for the future of street lighting were under consideration.

6.	WASTE STRATEGY REVIEW	PLSC17-2015
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Documents:

- Scrutiny Summary report

Issues:

- Potential fines if target for recycling is not achieved although it is acknowledged that no authority has yet been fined
- 3 weekly residual waste collection – proposed communication plan
- Must continue to highlight the weekly recycling collection
- Trade Waste – the Internal Audit Working Group had requested the Group monitor the implementation of the Action Plan following an Internal Audit in 2014
- Newly contracted HWRCs are exceeding recycling targets but work is still in progress with other sites

The Head of Service gave a presentation on Waste and Recycling – a copy was circulated to Members following the meeting and is also filed with the signed Minutes.

Issues Raised:

- Most recent data shows that the recycling target is being met but a jump from 52% to 58% was a significant challenge
- The low tonnage of waste and recycling within Powys dictates what measures can be taken for disposal
- Bring Sites are popular but not cost effective – Members suggested that fewer sites offering more facilities may be a way forward. Kerbside green waste collection would be welcomed but would involve low tonnages and economies of scale could not be achieved
- Trade Waste – the Welsh Government is reviewing legislation. More work has to be done to improve the efficiency of this element of the service.
- A recent budget seminar on proposals for savings suggested that two HWRCs would be closed – Members were concerned that this was contrary to increasing recycling targets. There was insufficient budget to maintain all sites but other, more cost effective solutions could be considered. It was necessary under current arrangements for residents to

travel some distance to access HWRCs and optimum locations would be sought

- Food Waste – Pembrokeshire has now joined the partnership and tonnages overall are being met.
- Four weekly residual waste collections – further assessments need to be undertaken before a move to four weekly residual waste collections could be considered.
- It was suggested that other considerations should be made regarding the Authority's overall carbon footprint – recycling is encouraged to enable national targets to be met, but consideration to other issues such as collection and travelling to HWRCs etc are not part of the equation.
- Enforcement arrangements need to be strengthened together with legislation
- Information and communication is essential in delivering the service

7.	TRANSPORT SCRUTINY REVIEW	PLSC18-2015
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Documents:

- Notes of a meeting of the Place Committee meeting as a Transport Scrutiny Review Group on 3 July 2015

Outcome:

- It was noted that comments had been forwarded to Cabinet for consideration in their deliberations

8.	ICT REVIEW	PLSC19-2015
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Documents:

- Scrutiny summary report

Outcome:

- The current situation was noted and that further information would be presented to the Joint Working Group as appropriate.

9.	STREET LIGHTING REVIEW GROUP	PLSC20-2015
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The Cabinet had requested that a working group be established to consider evidence as to what effect (if any) reductions in street lighting may have had on crime and accident statistics.

Outcome:

- County Councillors K Curry, V Evans and H Williams be appointed to a Street lighting Working Group to consider any available evidence in relation to crime and accidents following reduction of street lighting.

10.	WORK PROGRAMME	PLSC21-2015
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Documents:

- Forward work programme

Outcome:

- That the work programme be noted

11.	CORRESPONDENCE	PLSC22-2015
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There were no items of correspondence.

County Councillor R G Thomas (Chair)