

No.

CORPORATE PERFORMANCE AND RESOURCES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of an Extraordinary meeting held on 3rd March, 2020.

Present: Councillor M.R. Wilson (Chairman); Councillor O. Griffiths (Vice-Chairman); Councillors G.A. Cox, V.P. Driscoll, G. John, Dr. I.J. Johnson, Ms. S. Sivagnanam and J.W. Thomas.

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

721 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE –

These were received from Councillors G.D.D. Carroll and R. Crowley.

722 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST –

The following Members declared an interest in Agenda Item No. 3 – Car Parking – Guiding Principles and Charges and Agenda Item No 5(i) – Vale of Glamorgan Council i- Proposed Fees and Charges for 2020/2021 in that they had a dispensation from the Standards Committee to speak and vote on matters in relation to the Reshaping Services strategy in view of the fact that they were Members of the Vale of Glamorgan Council and also Town and Community Councillors:

Councillor M.R. Wilson (Chairman), Councillors V.P. Driscoll, G. John and Dr. I.J. Johnson.

723 CAR PARKING – GUIDING PRINCIPLES AND CHARGES (REF) –

Cabinet had, on 24th February, 2020 referred the report to both the Corporate Performance and Resources and Environment and Regeneration Scrutiny Committees for their consideration prior to a decision being taken by Cabinet on Car Parking – Guiding Principles and Charges for 2020/21.

The Cabinet Member for Education and Regeneration introduced the report, stating that this was a joint report from both the Education and Regeneration and the Neighbourhood Services and Transport Cabinet portfolios due to parking management and charges being a multi-faceted issue and not having a ‘one size fits all’ solution as this covered many areas such as parks, residential parking and businesses, shoppers and other users having very different needs.

The Cabinet Member for Education and Regeneration went on to say that this new report on the matter had taken time in order to carefully review the results of public consultation, Scrutiny Committee minutes and quantitative data in relation to the Car Parking Policy.

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The Cabinet Member added that there would be new options in terms of the parking enforcement and that they were nearly there in achieving outcomes around the Car Parking Guidelines that would benefit the public. It was therefore important to refer this report to the relevant Scrutiny Committees before a final decision would be made by Cabinet. She added that the issue around resident parking would be looked at through a further report to be presented to Cabinet in the near future.

The Cabinet Member for Neighbourhood Services and Transport stressed that the report was more to do with the management side of parking. He emphasised that there would be in most instances little or no changes or in fact no charges/additional charges for parking in various areas within the Vale. The emphasis here was on more effective parking enforcement in order to create what he termed as “churn” in parking which would mean increased turnover and therefore increased footfall for residents and others to park within the Vale of Glamorgan.

A Committee Member stated that the removal of some of the previous proposals from the parking report was to be welcomed – although he felt that some of the areas targeted were not used significantly and therefore enforcement would not be greatly required. The Member was also concerned that no economic assessment had been done in relation to the town centre and how the Parking Guidelines would impact here. He was also interested to hear what consideration the Cabinet Members had made regarding this. He also added that clarification was needed on the opening times for the multi-storey car parks in the Vale. He finally wanted to say that it was good to see free Sunday parking being implemented on Wyndham Street and the reduction of car parking charges elsewhere, ensuring that this be monitored in order to see if there was increased footfall as well as the need to ensure that Barry Island Car Park machines were working adequately.

The Cabinet Member for Education and Regeneration replied that this represented a different report from a different Administration. In terms of an economic assessment this was not about income generation, rather a new system employed to offset costs and increase turnover in car parking with any money accrued through this being used for further investment in parking facilities. The designation of two car parks as “shopper” car parks was intended for people to locate these easily. These car parks would have an initial two hour free period with charges thereafter. In the consultation with local shop keepers etc. around these car parks, no concerns had been raised about the implementation of these measures.

A Member raised a concern around displacement as currently in certain car parks these would be completely full relatively early in the day forcing other users to try and park elsewhere. He did however state that Members needed to wait and see what the effects of the new Parking Guidelines would be.

Another Member stated that these were much better proposals and it was good to see the introduction of charging in certain car parks and it would have to be accepted that there would be some ‘hiccups’ along the way as part of the implementation of these Guidelines.

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Also, a Member commented that this could have been an opportunity for a season ticket to be provided for certain car parks and to look at stretching the reduced charges at Barry Island over the winter.

The Cabinet Member for Education and Regeneration replied that the local Barry Island Traders had been consulted regarding winter charges. She also wanted to stress that the parking Enforcement Teams would be deployed where most needed. It was important to look at Barry Island Resort as a year round operation and not simply a seasonal one. If you were a regular visitor to Barry Island then you could potentially buy a season ticket which would cover Barry Island and other resorts.

A Committee Member pointed out the need to be careful around social media – noting that there were persons using this in order to let others know about various means of not paying parking charges. Ultimately car park users would need to pay in some way in order to support services.

The Leader stated that with regard to query raised by a Member concerning opening times for the multi-storey car park that this would remain 7.00 a.m. to 7.00 p.m. He stated that overall, this was a balanced, very reasonable report. He added that increasing parking permits could potentially stop the “churn” effect that the Cabinet Member for Neighbourhood Services and Transport had previously mentioned. The Leader also stated that some displacement in terms of parking would be inevitable from the Guidelines, but it was essential that these were applied and to look in due course at the results produced in order to see if there were any issues raised. He stressed however that measures to deter displacements such as the raising of signs in various parking areas would be used. The Leader also reiterated that parking permits could be bought, which would cover various parts of the Vale. Finally, he wished to add that he was in talks with the Llantwit Major and Cowbridge Town Councils regarding the potential issue of parking displacement.

The Cabinet Member for Neighbourhood Services and Transport also stated that currently some drivers had the view that they would not be caught or only be caught once or twice a month parking in areas where there were charges, but this would be only a minimal occupational cost. By taking enforcement back in-house and using measures such as a ‘camera car’ touring around the Vale of Glamorgan, raising signage around parking regulations, etc., this would deter inconsiderate parking and drivers, for example by local schools.

The Chairman asked if a report could be brought back to Scrutiny Committee in approximately a year’s time in order to get an update on how the changes in parking and charges had impacted the Vale of Glamorgan. This was agreed by the other Committee Members. The Leader also agreed but stated that due to the need to keep on top of issues such as displacement, an earlier or preliminary review or update would also be required.

The Cabinet Member for Neighbourhood Services and Transport added that there would be a need to look at Traffic Regulation Orders in light of these changes, which was echoed by the Head of Neighbourhood Services and Transport.

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It was subsequently

RECOMMENDED –

- (1) T H A T the report be noted.
- (2) T H A T the Scrutiny Committee's views be referred back to Cabinet in order that the proposed Car Parking – Guiding Principles and Charges 2020/21 and Equality Impact Assessment at Appendices 1 and 2 can be further considered by Cabinet.
- (3) T H A T a further report be received by the Committee providing an update on the implementation of the proposed Car Parking – Guiding Principles and Charges in the middle half of 2021.

Reasons for recommendations

- (1) In view of the content of the report.
- (2) To ensure that the views of the Scrutiny Committee are considered prior to a decision being taken by Cabinet on the final Car Parking – Guiding Principles and Charges for 2020/21.
- (3) To ensure that the Scrutiny Committee is updated on the implementation and progress of the proposed Car Parking – Guiding Principles and Charges for 2020/21.

724 PRESENTATION: DIGITAL STRATEGY – CUSTOMER AND EMPLOYEE –

This was presented initially by the Head of Policy and Business Transformation, who stated that the original Strategy was published in 2017 and since that time had been brought to the Committee periodically as part of the Reshaping Services programme. The key aim was to promote a much more 'end to end' approach to digital transformation, meaning a move away from just simply forms and channels to a more joined up service design approach. This meant not just looking at technology or hardware but also looking at the design of the entire user experience for the customer and how the service is actually delivered. The four key objectives of the Strategy were around –

- Digital customer,
- Employee,
- Place and
- Collaboration.

The Head of Policy and Business Transformation went on to describe opportunities for working differently using the Digital Strategy – such as putting the Customer first in designing services combined with Cloud based storage for digital systems – therefore removing the need for an in-house space intensive resource and removing blockages when getting different systems to link into one another. This was based

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around an agile approach, project managing and service design which, through its use of exploration pilot and then push-out, as well as capturing useful feedback, would help to deliver better paced and scaled results.

He then went on to describe the progress and process around the Digital Strategy and how it would be fed through the Reshaping Services boards.

The Head of Finance added that the focus of the presentation would be on two out of the four key objectives – Digital customer and employee. She stated there were numerous challenges around the Digital Strategy as it was an approach which involved looking at things in a different transformational way combined with the use of new digital technologies.

The Head of Finance stated that there would be an interactive exercise whereby Committee Members would be able to answer questions online using their tablets and mobile phones and this feedback would be gathered over the course of the meeting and presented back to the Committee.

The Operational Manager for Customer Relations went on to outline the areas around the Digital Customer and Employee – starting with the Digital Customer:

- What are we trying to achieve?
The Council's key aim was to meet customer needs and expectations. The key areas here were the need for customers to have the ability to access services 24/7 in various formats. The design for digital services needed to be from a customer perspective with the aim of reducing demand caused by an initial failure to respond to customer requests or provide a service to the expected standard. As part of this it was important to remove any element of inefficiency and boost response times to customers. In order to back this approach, customers would also need to have access and the skills in order to use digital services.
- What does the customer want?
The Operational Manager for Customer Relations stated a key want or need from the customer was for process transformation and to achieve this it was necessary to utilise technology, for example digital services, in order to improve the way that the customer made a request to the Council. Following an analysis of the reasons why customers contacted the Council, the top or most common requests were areas such as finding out how much Council Tax was, setting up direct debits for Council Tax, planning application appeals, bid for a new home, apply for a Blue Badge, reporting that rubbish has not been collected, etc.
- What have we done so far?
There had already been a significant redesign of the Vale website in order for the customer to have a quick and easy way of accessing key services and sources of information using the GDS (Government Digital Service) principles and mobile first approach. A joined up, collaborative approach in order to implement digital improvement helped to reduce costs as well as removing

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barriers such as bulky item collections. The Operational Manager for Customer Relations stated that digital inclusion via the Get Vale Online network continued to support people with skills and access and had been relaunched in April 2020. As part of this inclusion, access to PCs were being provided in Vale public libraries as well as the provision of digital drop in centres.

- With reference to challenges to date, the Operational Manager for Customer Relations referred to the Oracle CRM platform - a key piece of technology utilised by the Council. This had been used from 2006 onwards in order to replace a range of older systems. Although this has been successful, the Oracle CRM was now out of date and would be difficult to integrate with newer systems such as Cloud based technology. This meant that there was still a large amount of manual intervention in managing information and customer requests which tied up front line staff unnecessarily. There was ongoing work looking at a digital customer experience platform which could replace the current system and would also ensure that related systems talked to each other and were updated. Another challenge remained demand for digitally skilled staff locally which put pressure on recruitment and capacity for the Local Authority such as in recruiting web developers. Similarly, demand at C1V remained high but this was coupled with reduced resources. Finally, to sum up, the redesign of front-end services would not improve customer experience if ultimately these were not matched by similar improvements in delivery and proactive communication.
- The Operational Manager for Customer Relations explained the Connecting Wales service, which was a shared communication and contact centre platform for the Welsh public sector. This was a means for the Council keeping up to date in collaboration with other Local Authorities using what he termed an “omni channel approach”. As part of this it helped to provide improved public experience as well as employee satisfaction and collaboration, reduced costs as well as increased efficiency and resilience. In tandem, the Council was looking at developing a digital team in order for this team to have overall ownership on all digital process design. The Council needed to look at ‘reusable’ technology in order to make savings and to use the best possible resources for any given situation, for example utilisation of automation for high volume / low complexity processes and staff for high risk / high complexity processes such as Social or Child Care and Welfare. He added that the use of Connecting Wales involved the Council paying a subscription only for what it required out of the service. He cited the example of increased collaboration through this service with other Local Authorities, for example in terms of flood response calls being rerouted to another Local Authority in order to deal with non-priority requests.

The Operational Manager for Customer Relations added that he was looking to host Councillors at the C1V Contact Centre in March as part of an overview of the service. He added that the comments from the online questions and responses at tonight’s meeting would help to inform this visit.

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The next part of the presentation was outlined by the Operational Manager for Employee Services, who spoke about the Digital Employee:

- What was the Council trying to achieve?
The Operational Manager for Employee Services stated that a key aim of this drive for greater use of digital technology was in order to remove organisational/departmental silos and therefore improve the sharing of best practice between the various parts of the Council. Another area for improvement would be around increasing the security of information and as part of this less use of paper or paper based systems, looking at increasing employee efficiency and productivity such as using digital technology to free up staff in order to do more complex work. This also meant looking at increasing employee wellbeing through being able to access health and wellbeing services digitally and agile working. He also referred to using digital technology to reduce environmental costs such as via agile working which would reduce the pressure on office accommodation as well as less travel and commuting. The use of information via digital technology would also help to inform and prevent issues occurring within the work place, such as active monitoring of sickness data.
- What has been done so far?
The Operational Manager for Employee Services stated that a new recruitment / DBS site had been launched which had resulted in over 99% of applications now being received digitally thereby reducing the previous semi-manual process. This also benefited applicants as the new system updated them on each stage of the process in a more effective way. In terms of DBS checks, almost 3,000 checks had been carried out over the last 12 months with 80% of those checks done between 1 – 3 weeks which had reduced process costs as well as strengthening protection and safeguarding. A roll out of the digital learning portal had occurred, meaning that all staff would now be able to access digital learning whether they were regularly working on a PC or tablet or not. Other digital rollouts included Office 365 and Teams, which had so far been rolled out to over a third of the Council's users as well as the introduction of the StaffNet+ portal which would be accessible to all staff even from personal devices. The emphasis here was to enable agile or home working via auto VPN and the GovRoam scheme which would ensure 'anywhere, anytime' connection. Other actions included the building of a more resilient network, setting up a communication hub / workspace and the deployment of power BI in order to report and display information interactively.
- Challenges faced to date?
The Operational Manager for Employee Services stated that a key challenge was around an ageing work force within certain areas and a concomitant need to upskill them in the use of new digital technology. This would need to work hand in hand with the recruitment and retention of other, younger, age groups in the workforce through, in part, using the technology they had been brought up or were familiar with. Again, the emphasis was on creating a more mobile and more agile work force and to provide technology to those members of the work force who were already in this position. As part of this, there was a need

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to push for ending the reliance on paper-based systems and processes. There was also a need to challenge the concept of 'managing by attendance' in order to advance more agile working and therefore to move towards a more output based culture.

- What's next?
The Operational Manager for Employee Services finally looked at the initiatives that would be going forward. Firstly, revised information and IT strategies in order to improve access to crucial information. Looking to develop more offices with greater meeting technology which would remove the need to travel for face to face meetings or conferences. To spread the adoption of home working policies in order to remove cost as well as improving employee efficiency and to enhance general wellbeing. Finally, to encourage two way communication across the organisation ensuring that skills and opportunities were effectively used.

The Committee Members were then shown the responses they had made digitally through the Mentimeter application. The responses were around several key questions that had been asked during the meeting and responded to by Committee Members via the Mentimeter app such as 'what are the common queries that you get from residents', 'how frequently do you visit the Vale of Glamorgan Council website in order to request services or raise issues' and 'what opportunities do you believe that digital technology could provide'. The Committee Members then had an opportunity to discuss the answers that had been collated.

A Committee Member asked about the Office 365 roll out and when this would be coming to Councillors. The Business Improvement Manager replied that this would be rolled out to all Vale of Glamorgan Councillors during the current financial year.

Another Committee Member asked if the digital roll out would help to improve services including C1V. He cited an example where he had logged a report on potholes in his Ward to C1V and had not had a response after several weeks. The Head of Policy and Business Transformation replied that this exemplified two types of question asked of the Council –1) requesting a service and 2) questions resulting from the Council failing to respond to a request. The Digital Services Project was geared in order to address and ultimately remove questions arising out of a failure of response. The Operational Manager for Customer Relations wanted to add that it was essential that regardless how a customer of the Council contacted it concerning an issue, this needed to be resolved as soon as possible. The Committee Member responded by saying the Council policy should be that work requested by the public is done after 15 working days of the original request.

Another Committee Member stated that it was important for the Council to be more efficient and the need to manage expectations and to be clear on how the Council would respond to the customer and to stress to the customer that their request would be dealt with as soon as possible.

The Chairman asked if it would be possible to have a dashboard for managers and / or other staff in order to manage performance. The Operational Manager for

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Employee Services replied that the current system's age precluded it from having dashboards bolted on. There would be a different process utilised in order to do this and over the next 12 to 18 months the Council would be better placed to have such a solution or replacement in place.

The Chairman asked for a further report on the Digital Strategy be provided in the future and was pleased that a visit to the Contact Centre was to be arranged on 20th/23rd March. It was

RECOMMENDED –

- (1) T H A T the update regarding Digital Strategy – Customer and Employee be noted.
- (2) T H A T a further report on the progress of the Digital Strategy be provided to a future Committee meeting.
- (3) T H A T Elected Members have the opportunity to visit the C1V Contact Centre in the near future.

Reasons for recommendations

- (1) For Committee Members to note the update on the Digital Strategy – Customer and Employee.
- (2) That Committee Members be updated on the progress of the Digital Strategy.
- (3) For Elected Members to have the opportunity to see the workings of the C1V Contact Centre.

725 MATTER WHICH THE CHAIRMAN HAD DECIDED WAS URGENT –

RECOMMENDED – T H A T the following item of business which the Chairman had decided was urgent for reason of the need to consider changes in service charges prior to the matter being considered by Cabinet on 9th March, 2020 for implementation of fees and charges prior to 1st April, 2020 be considered.

726 VALE OF GLAMORGAN COUNCIL – PROPOSED FEES AND CHARGES FOR 2020/21 (MD) –

The Head of Policy and Business Transformation outlined the report, stating that this was part of the Reshaping Services programme and Income Generation and Commercial Opportunities Strategy. The report had been produced in conjunction with the Head of Finance. Producing a composite report had been identified as best practice by CIPFA and had been produced in order to implement the fees and charges detailed within the report from 1st April, 2020. The Head of Policy and Business Transformation stated that next time the proposed fees and charges report

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would be produced in order to be considered alongside budget proposals. The report set out proposed fees and charges for a range of services offered by the Council. He added that the proposed fees and charges contained within the report and appendices reflected an inflationary increase of 1.7% rounded to the nearest 10p with specific details of notable variations from this being provided within the body of the report and appendices. He asked the Committee to consider the contents of the report and appendices.

A Committee Member stated that it was good to see an overall combined report on these issues. However, he noted that the use of CPI here contrasted with the recent Council Tax raise which was increasing approximately three times the rate of CPI. He had no fundamental disagreement with the report and going forward, both he and the Chairman suggested that the Council should look at the benchmarking of fees and charges and this should be looked at in a subsequent report.

Another Committee Member raised a query around the Neighbourhood Services section in the report and the related appendix concerning charges for Neighbourhood Services and the proposed increase in line with inflation. He wanted to highlight the charges around the use of football pitches and facilities and their impact on local football, in particular senior football, where approximately 12 teams had been lost in the Vale of Glamorgan league since last year. He was concerned that a further rise in charges – however small – could impact the league further and illustrated this by the fact that the loss of 12 teams previously had amounted to approximately £6,000 in lost charges to the Council. This also had the wider impact of potentially harming local grass roots football – even by the implementation of relatively small rises in charges.

The Leader responded to his concerns by stating that he would ask officers to look at a comparison of income derived from this sport over recent years and the number of teams so as to inform decision making at Cabinet.

The Chairman raised a query around charges for collection of bulky household goods and domestic waste which ran between £15-£20. He asked about the impact of this in terms of fly tipping and whether fly tipping remained a large scale problem. The Head of Neighbourhood Services and Transport replied that statistics concerning fly tipping would be going to the Environment and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee in the near future. She added that there had been some additional fly tipping but this had been balanced by an increase in prosecutions. The majority of fly tipping tended to involve less bulky items such as furniture, rather it was smaller 'black bag' items. The costs charged for removal of bulky items at most covered costs only. There was also now an increase in re-use sites or shops, to which the Chairman asked if more help could be given to advertise such re-use services. The Head of Neighbourhood Services and Transport replied that the Vale of Glamorgan already did some work around advertising and encouraging re-use schemes, citing a recent bric-a-brac session in Rhoose. Advertising for this was done through the Vale of Glamorgan Council website as well as the local community, although she noted that more work could be done in this area.

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Another Councillor, on the issue of reusing bulky items, referred to the potential set up of a re-use shop that could stock such items. The Head of Neighbourhood Services and Transport replied that the Vale of Glamorgan Council would be looking into setting this up but currently the priority was the resource recovery facility and also the need to balance such measures against stopping various charity shops within the Vale receiving much needed items for sale and charity support.

A Committee Member stated that in future better coding and identification of bulky items would be useful as it seemed there had been an increase in bulky items being abandoned as a result of fly tipping. He had identified a number of such fly tipping incidents within his Ward which he had reported to the Council. The Head of Neighbourhood Services and Transport replied that it was difficult to identify who had fly tipped when it was a sofa / fridge or similar bulky item. However, black bags often contained personal details of the fly tippers and prosecutions were therefore easier. She also referred to the Council's use of social media in order to highlight prosecutions and to make people aware of the issues around fly tipping.

It was

RECOMMENDED –

- (1) T H A T the proposals for amendments to fees and charges and associated policy and process changes as set out in the report and associated appendices be noted.
- (2) T H A T the comments of the Scrutiny Committee be referred to Cabinet to consider when making their final determination.
- (3) T H A T it be noted that a further report will be presented to Cabinet in relation to Tranche 2, single use sports ground project during 2020/21.
- (4) T H A T a subsequent report to look at benchmarking of fees and charges be produced.
- (5) T H A T a further report be produced looking at the comparison of income derived from Football over recent years and the number of teams so as to inform decision making at Cabinet.

Reasons for recommendations

- (1) In view of the content of the report and appendices.
- (2) To enable the Committee's views to be considered by Cabinet when making a decision on fees and charges for services for 2020/21.
- (3) To provide an update on the single use sports grounds project.
- (4) To provide a benchmark of fees and charges.

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(5) To look at the comparison of income derived from Football over recent years and the number of teams so as to inform decision making at Cabinet.