No.

ENVIRONMENT AND REGENERATION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of a remote meeting held on 20th October, 2020.

The Committee agenda is available <u>here</u>

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

<u>Also present</u>: Councillors N. Moore (Leader), L. Burnett (Cabinet Member for Education and Regeneration), P.G. King (Cabinet Member for Neighbourhood Services and Transport), E. Williams (Cabinet Member for Legal, Regulatory and Planning Services), K.P. Mahoney and R.A. Penrose.

143 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 recorded via the internet and this recording archived for future viewing."

144 MINUTES -

RECOMMENDED – T H A T the minutes of the meeting held on 22nd September, 2020 be approved as a correct record.

145 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST -

No declarations were received.

146 CORONA VIRUS RECOVERY STRATEGY (REF) –

The Director of Environment and Housing presented the report which provided an update on the Council's Corona Virus Recovery Strategy.

The report provided Cabinet with the Council's Coronavirus Recovery Strategy detailed at Appendix A to the report.

The Strategy was structured around the three phases to the Council's management of the pandemic: response, transition and recovery.

Reflecting on the learning from response had identified a series of recovery themes which had been aligned with the Council's Well-being Objectives drawn from the Corporate Plan 2020-25.

Informed by a Community Impact Assessment, Economic Impact Assessment and the reflective learning from staff, partners and members, a number of strategic recovery priorities had been identified. These priorities provided the strategic direction for services to develop recovery plans and would inform the Council's Annual Delivery Plan 2021/22.

The report provided a commentary to the structure and content of the Coronavirus Recovery Strategy and sought endorsement for the Strategy and approach to developing and delivering it.

The report recommended referring to all Scrutiny Committees for awareness and the identification of any specific areas of activity that could be reflected in future work programmes. The report also recommended sharing with partners of the Vale of Glamorgan Public Services Board and all Town and Community Councils for their awareness and to ensure continued integration and coordination of activity in the interest of residents' well-being.

With regard to the remit of the Scrutiny Committee, the Director of Environment and Housing referred to the Strategic Recovery Priorities relating to employment, sustainable economic growth and to enhance and enjoy the environment.

A Committee Member stated that an area focus should include coastal erosion. In reply, the Director stated that this came under the umbrella of green infrastructure highlighted within Strategic Recovery Priority 12. The Director stated that this was extremely relevant to the remit of the Committee.

Overall, the Committee was in agreement that Priorities 11 - 14 should be accepted for further scrutiny.

Subsequently, it was

RECOMMENDED -

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

(2) T H A T the Strategic Priorities 11, 12, 13 and 14 be identified as areas of focus for the Scrutiny Committee.

Reasons for recommendations

(1) Following an overview of the work undertaken in response, transition and recovery from the Corona Virus pandemic.

(2) In order to identify areas of particular focus for scrutiny activity.

147 VALE OF GLAMORGAN GATEWAY STATION WELTAG STAGE TWO OUTLINE BUSINESS CASE (REF) –

The Head of Neighbourhood Services and Transport presented the report which had been referred from Cabinet to the Scrutiny Committee for its consideration. For this item the Committee welcomed Matthew Fry from Arcadis.

The report provided an update on progress of the Vale of Glamorgan Gateway Station WeITAG Stage Two Outline Business Study. This was covered in Appendix A to the report.

The Head of Neighbourhood Services and Transport advised that the draft WeITAG Stage Two Outline Business Case had been completed by Arcadis which had assessed the do minimum scenario plus four options for a station located near the M4 junction 34. The four locations being:

- Location 1 Land south east of the Renishaw development
- Location 2 Land south of the railway between the railway and the River Ely
- Location 3 Situated on marsh/wet woodland west of the Renishaw development
- Location 4 Existing Renishaw car park site.

Members were advised that on the basis of the WeITAG Stage Two Study and the potential socio economic, cultural and environmental benefits identified, it was considered that Location 4 had merit in being taken forward for further consideration as part of an updated WeITAG Stage Two Appraisal which would include a full value for money assessment. Although Location 4 had been identified as the preferred option, it was advised that the Study considered the potential for an alternate location, due to constraints that could impact on the implementation.

The Head of Neighbourhood Services and Transport stressed that it had been recognised that proposals for a Vale of Glamorgan Gateway Station presented regional, strategic and sustainable transport opportunities that could be better recognised and scrutinised separately from the highway proposals. This also allowed a number of rail sub-options to be developed and independently assessed. In addition, the rail and highway options under consideration had separate management and control processes which would influence the next step and programming for ongoing WeITAG assessments. In agreement with Welsh Government, a decision had therefore been made by the Vale of Glamorgan Council to separate assessment of the Vale of Glamorgan Gateway Station option from the M4 junction 34 to A48 highway link options.

The Committee was advised that following discussions with stakeholders, the preferred design parameter at this stage and as confirmed by the Vale of Glamorgan Council was for a Category D station, able to handle 250,000 to 500,000 trips per year. This would be future proofed, as opposed to a minimum Category F station. It had been identified that as a Category D station there would

be a minimum of 500 car parking spaces with the ability to extend this to 1,000 spaces.

In terms of rail service provisions and timetable it had been assumed that all passing Transport for Wales services would call at the new Vale of Glamorgan Gateway Station. This could result in a service frequency of approximately three trains per hour in each direction encompassing the Ebbw Vale to Maesteg service, the Carmarthen/ Milford Haven to Manchester Piccadilly services, and the Swansea to Cardiff Central service. It had been estimated that there would be a 4-minute period to slow, stop and accelerate a train for the proposed station. Significant amendment of the timetable was likely to be required as time could not be absorbed by the current planning margins and turnarounds. Network Rail had also confirmed that the sidings offered additional redundancy which aided performance and could often be used for broken down trains. A further timetable study would be required once operational assumptions had been confirmed and defined further.

Following the introduction by the Head of Neighbourhood Services and Transport the Committee welcomed Mr. Paul Waite who had registered to speak on this matter.

Mr. Waite began by stating that Members of the Committee may not have had time to read the 354 pages of the WeITAG Two Plus Gateway document, but he had as had fellow environment and transport consultants. Mr. Waite outlined that there was a vast amount of inappropriate cut and paste from the M4 Junction 34 to A48 Transport Study which bared no relevance to the objectives of the Gateway Station. He stated that it was littered with anomalies such as:

- The Outline Business Case (page 2) the Scrutiny recommendation on 25th June, 2019 regarding writing to Welsh Government on the climate emergency impact on the environment. Referenced here but not actioned.
- The Strategic Case (page 11) references a review group meeting for Stage 1 on Monday, 27th November, 2017. This was probably the most important review group according to WeITAG guidance, yet minutes had never been seen and stakeholder composition was open to challenge.
- Peter Brett Report The Case for Change The Case for Change was made predominantly on the basis of realising the Strategic Development and the employment opportunities associated with Cardiff Airport and St. Athan Economic Zone. It referenced Aston Martin, the Battery Giga Plant and connectivity to Cardiff Airport. Mr. Waite asked how exactly did the Committee think a rail station on the extremities of the Vale taking people to Cardiff Central would realise opportunities at Cardiff Airport and the Economic Zone. There was no mention of improving the bus network nor at present were there buses servicing this part of the Vale going to Cardiff Airport and the Economic Zone.

In addition, Mr. Waite stated that the Impact Assessment report had been trivialised and referred to the Bio-Diversity Study as a preliminary study, a Phase 1 Habitat Assessment and the Ecological Appraisal. This whole study area was recognised as sensitive, yet no primary data had been collected by competent professionals. The Council's own Supplementary Planning Guidance required this to be done in order to inform decisions at the earliest stage. In addition, the local authority had a duty under the Environment Act to protect and enhance biodiversity and this approach had always been to avoid environmental impacts not just to mitigate them.

Mr. Waite then stated that this brought him to the real reason for the report. Recommendations on page 10 stated that accessibility to and from the station would be enhanced with potential for a new or enhanced road infrastructure between the M4 junction 34 and the A48. This report today was nothing other than a backdoor way to add weight to a road between M4 junction 34 and A48 Sycamore Cross. This represented a transport study that would in time prove to be flawed through the appropriate channels.

Finally, Mr. Waite asked the Committee to consider the following steps:

1. For the Committee to recommend a full bio-diversity study prior to any advancement to WeITAG Stage 3 as a local authority duty under the Environment Act.

2. To reconsider the real reason for splitting the two WeITAG Studies.

3. To provide the community with the Review Group minutes from 27th November, 2017.

In response to Mr. Waite's comments, the Head of Neighbourhood Services and Transport stated that she had received a request for the minutes of what had been termed as the Review Group meeting for 27th November, 2017. She advised that this was not a technical Review Group as in a group that reviewed the evidence and made technical views and opinions, but it was more a presentation to a group of organisations. This would be shared with Mr. Waite via email which was why there were no minutes. A response to the request would be sent to the Committee Members and other interested parties. In terms of a bio-diversity study the Head of Neighbourhood Services and Transport stated that it was still at the early stages of the process for which an Environmental Impact Assessment would not normally be undertaken. This was more appropriate for the Stage Three should the assessment be progressed. She added that the Study was only at the design concept phase and so an Environmental Impact Assessment would come out if the proposal was taken forward. It was therefore, important for the Council to be proportionate in the work undertaken, and at this stage, all that was required was the overall impact on bio-diversity but a fuller assessment would be undertaken at the next stage. In addition, further consultation would be undertaken on the strategic road improvements and no decisions had yet been made.

With regards to the reasons why the Gateway Station and the Strategic Road Improvement had been separated, the Head of Neighbourhood Services and Transport stated that there had been discussions with the Review Group, and they were advised that the Council was looking at splitting the project into two. Discussions on this had also been held with Welsh Government. The main reason for the split was that there were two separate processes, the first around the station was a much more regional project which was likely, if taken forward, to be picked up the City Deal and this came under a separate process which was GRIP and Transport for Wales Study. The Strategic Road Improvement was a different process and would also have different impacts which Mr. Waite had referred to. This was purely down to the technical management of the two processes.

The Committee then asked a series of questions with the following replies given.

Question	Answer
The report retained the 'do minimum' option and what was the thinking around why this remained given that the Strategic Road Improvement was now a separate project	In terms of the 'do minimum' approach, this was part of the current consultation which meant that there were in reality 5 options for a new road scheme. This was for both projects and was normal practice.
How would the development of a train station improve the Strategic Road Network and provide benefits for local businesses and communities?	The Member's comment referred to page 5 of the Cabinet report and the WeITAG Stage One report so this was an earlier part of the process which were the original aims of the project when the road and the train station were under the same umbrella.
Could officers confirm that the new Stage Two process would in no way reference a new road and would be considered entirely separately?	It was important to recognise that there would still be a need to improve access to the new station whether that would be via the current infrastructure or by a new road. If this moved to the next stage then terminology would be reconsidered because the station had only recently been separated out from the road project. There was no assumption that the road would be built so the station could be built without a new road.
It was stated that the new station would be a Category D station, with similar train stations located at Dinas Powys but this had proposal for car parking spaces between 500 – 1000 spaces so how many other Category D train stations would have similar spaces and were there different planning restrictions?	Category D stations and the number of spaces were dependent upon the land and it was also important to recognise that the Dinas Powys location was very accessible with walking and cycling routes close by so there would be an expectation for less parking. In addition, the Gateway Station was a more rural location and was more accessible by car because of the location to the M4 so there would be a high reliance on car spaces.

There was an assumption that all Transport for Wales train services would stop at the new station but this was not guaranteed so there was concern that figures around the use of the station would be over inflated so this brought into question to viability of the scheme.	The process required consideration of the best case scenario and the number of trains that used the station would be refined as the process moved forward. This was an assumption and would made clearer with Transport for Wales at Stage 3.
It was mentioned that this represented a regional project likely to be picked up by the City Deal so where would funding for the road project come from?	As yet no decision on the road had been made and so there was no commitment for funding, but the train project had been talked about by the City Deal and it would not be competing for funds for a new road.
If this became a City Deal project would that mean that planning was out of the hands of the Vale of Glamorgan Council?	If this became a City Deal project then as the local Planning Authority consideration would still be needed by the Vale of Glamorgan Council unless it was considered a national significant project by Welsh Government.
What were the benefits to residents of the Vale of Glamorgan?	The most obvious benefit would be to Renishaw which operated on the boundary of the Vale of Glamorgan Council and also other businesses such at Hensol Castle. In the longer term it was hoped to realise the transport benefit for Vale of Glamorgan residents who would be better able to travel to London and Cardiff via a Park and Ride scheme. It was also accepted that there would be benefits for the wider regional area.
If Option 4 was selected what exactly were the constraints around development as mentioned in the report?	The constraints referred to in the report were around the need for an agreement with Renishaw regarding the development of the land.
Could there be clarity of whether the Gateway Station was a stand-alone project and was not co-dependent on the development of a new road?	Assurance could be given that the Gateway Station could be stand alone because it was a regional project. However, it was also recognised that the new train station would have greater benefit if a new road was developed, so for the maximum benefit, both projects were needed.

A Committee Member, as local Ward Member, stated that there were concerns in his Ward of a possible link between the train station and a new road. There were concerns regarding where the 1000 new cars would travel through to get to the station which could consequently lead to a call for a new road. The Member asked for further confirmation that this was a stand alone project. In reply, the Head of Neighbourhood Services and Transport confirmed that she could give assurance that the two projects were separate, but the only proviso was that a road would improve accessibility to the new railway station. Both would have to be considered in conjunction if either did or did not happen in order to maximise potential.

In referring to the 4-minute waiting time for trains, a Committee Member stated that there was no chance of the London trains stopping at the new Gateway Station, given the amount of money spent on electrification. In reply, the Head of Neighbourhood Services and Transport clarified that further discussion on services and timetable would be needed with Transport for Wales and Network Rail.

A Committee proposed a recommendation for Cabinet to disregard any consideration of the potential development of the new road linking Junction 34 to the airport so that the train station project could be given an independent assessment of its feasibility. This recommendation, being seconded and voted upon, was carried by the Committee.

Subsequently, it was

RECOMMENDED -

(1) T H A T the progress made on the Vale of Glamorgan Gateway Station WeITAG Stage Two Outline Business Case relating to proposals for a new railway station in the Vale of Glamorgan located near to the M4 junction 34 be noted.

(2) T H A T Cabinet be asked to disregard any consideration of the potential development of the new road linking the M4 Junction 34 to Cardiff Airport so that the Gateway Station project be given an independent assessment of its feasibility.

Reasons for recommendations

(1) To update Members on progress made on the scheme.

(2) In order to inform Cabinet of the views of the Scrutiny Committee that the development of a new road between M4 Junction 34 and Cardiff Airport should be considered separately and have no impact on proposals for the new Gateway Station.

148 WALES AUDIT OFFICE: WASTE MANAGEMENT REVIEW – VALE OF GLAMORGAN (DEH) –

The Operational Manager (Neighbourhood Services and Transport), presented the report which advised Members of the findings of the Auditor General for Wales' examination of the Vale of Glamorgan's arrangements for reducing waste and meeting statutory recycling targets alongside the Council's response to its findings.

The Wales Audit Office review had focused on the effectiveness of the Council's arrangements in reducing waste and meeting national statutory recycling targets.

Overall, it was regarded that the report findings were generally positive and concluded that the Council was making significant changes to household recycling collections and was on course to meet Welsh Government recycling targets but would need to develop a long-term waste management strategy, address the service's financial pressures and develop a more structured and documented approach to involving the diversity of the population.

The key findings from the review were as follows:

- The Council was following national guidance on household waste management, although the development of an overall strategy would enable its waste management service to reflect wider social, economic and environmental goals;
- The Council had significantly improved its recycling performance but would need to address the financial risks and pressures of the service as part of its forward planning; and
- The Council had engaged with residents while making changes to its recycling service but needed to consider a more structured and documented approach to involving the diversity of the population.

The report identifies four proposals for improvement:

- P1: The Council should ensure that its forthcoming waste management strategy was sufficiently long-term, reflected wider social, economic and environmental goals, and addressed the financial risks to the service going forward.
- P2: The Council should consider whether it had the staff resources to develop, manage and deliver the service changes in a sustainable way.
- P3: The Council should introduce a more structured approach to involving the diversity of the population in relation to significant service changes.
- P4: The Council should fully complete Equality Impact Assessments in relation to significant service changes

In response to the report findings, the Operational Manager had developed an action plan which was contained at Appendix 2 and would now be progressed by the Council.

The Operational Manager for Neighbourhood Services and Transport also advised the Committee, that the Council had been successful in three financial bids submitted to Welsh Government. The first was for a grant of £500k for new waste sorting equipment for the new transfer site located in the Atlantic Trading Estate. The second was for £250k for new recycling bins for residents living in flats and apartments. The third bid was for £358k to set up its own reuse shop which would be linked to the existing Household Waste Recycling Centre. It was noted that the Committee was keen to see the reuse shop project developed as they had previously shown support for a facility following a site visit to Swansea Council's reuse shop and noting the community benefits.

In addition, the Operational Manager highlighted that recent bench marking figures had shown that the Vale of Glamorgan Council had the lowest costs for collecting refuse waste in Wales. Furthermore, Natural Resources Wales had indicated that the Vale had already hit its 2025, 70% recycling rate, 5 years ahead of schedule.

A Committee Member referred to improvement proposal 3, and the need for a more structured approach to involve the diversity of the population and changes to service. He commented that he was aware of a resident who did not know of the new waste collecting arrangements and also of views expressed that there were too many containers. Audit Wales had raised concern regarding better engagement, so he asked Officers to expand upon this point. In reply, the Operational Manager advised that a team of staff was on hand to support residents through the new changes to waste collections. Recent changes had affected over 20,000 residents, of which 1 or 2 may have been missed and their concerns would have been responded to. In terms of assisting vulnerable people, the Council had introduced a new type of container, which had 4 individual compartments that was easier to use and removed the need for multiple containers.

The Member in coming back to the Officers response, stated that new collection arrangements in Barry had been in place for a week now, and so there should have been learning from how the scheme had been rolled out in the western parts of the Vale. In reply, the Operational Manager stated that this was still only day two, and the process in Barry had been managed differently to the roll out in the western Vale, so there had been learning which had meant less calls from the public. For example, Wardens had been present on all rounds to monitor compliance and there had been more communication with residents. Wardens would provide a debrief which would be cross referenced with calls from the public. Overall, he believed that yesterday the Council received 22 calls for 4000 homes, which could be considered as a good performance. He added that complaints and concerns would be looked into.

In reply to a query regarding staffing levels and turnover, the Operational Manager stated that the number of staff collecting waste had improved, but this had resulted in budget pressures. This had been highlighted by Audit Wales. One area that had been challenging was the back-office staff, so it had been recognised to look at this function in order to deliver strategic objectives.

There being no further comments or queries, the Committee

RECOMMENDED -

(1) T H A T the key findings arising from the Wales Audit Office's review of Council's arrangements for reducing waste and meeting statutory recycling targets (Appendix A) and the Council's response to the review and the Wales Audit Office's proposals for improvement (Appendix B) be noted.

(2) T H A T the report be referred to Audit Committee and thereon Cabinet for endorsement of the proposed actions to address the proposals for improvement.

Reasons for recommendations

(1) Following scrutiny and review of the findings the Wales Audit Office's review of the Council's waste management arrangements and the Council's response.

(2) To ensure the Council responds appropriately and implements areas of improvement as identified by the Wales Audit Office. To update Members on progress made on the scheme.

149 MATTER WHICH THE CHAIRMAN HAD DECIDED WAS URGENT -

RECOMMENDED – T H A T the following item, which the Chairman has decided was urgent for the reason given beneath the minute heading be considered.

150 CALL-IN FROM COUNCILLOR V.P. DRISCOLL – OBJECTION REPORT: COSMESTON COUNTRY PARK CARPARK, PORTHKERRY COUNTRY PARK CARPARK, WYNDHAM STREET CAR PARK, BARRY AND TOWN HALL CARPARK, COWBRIDGE – PROPOSED INTRODUCTION OF CAR PARKING CHARGING (REF) -

(Urgent by reason of the need to consider the matter at the earliest opportunity and within the 20 day working deadline)

The Chairman had deemed the above to be an urgent item by reason of the need for the Scrutiny Committee to consider the matter at the earliest opportunity and within the 20-day working deadline.

The Chairman asked Councillor Driscoll (Member of the Committee) to introduce the reasons for the Call-In.

Councillor Driscoll indicated that the consultation process was flawed because it had been held during the height of the Covid-19 Pandemic and at the time the Gem newspaper was not in circulation. This prevented adequate communications of the consultation. In addition, the report had stated that notices were put up at site locations. Again, this was at a time when residents were encouraged to stay at home and only go out for essential travel. Councillor Driscoll therefore moved a recommendation for the consultation to be re-opened. The Committee then welcomed Councillors K.P.Mahoney and R.A. Penrose, local Ward Members who had requested to speak on this item.

Councillor Penrose began by stating that he endorsed the comments made by Councillor Driscoll as the consultation was not adequate especially when considering the Covid situation. In general terms, Councillor Penrose expressed his opposition to the proposals to introduce car parking charges which had already been agreed by Cabinet. Councillor Penrose raised a question as to whether Cabinet would take any notice to the responses if the consultation was re-opened.

Councillor Mahoney in being asked to speak stated that this was not a fair consultation as it had been held under Covid-19 restrictions. He referred to the report which indicated that notices had been put up in the Penarth Times and Barry and District News, when circulation had been low for some time. Notices had also been put on lamp posts in areas where people had been told to keep away from. Councillor Mahoney stated that when something of this nature happened, he would personally hand deliver leaflets to every person outlining what was going on. Councillor Mahoney commented that it was unfair for these proposals to be introduced on the stroke of the end of lockdown. He questioned the reasoning for consultations which were simply tick boxing exercises. He stated that the responses from consultations were not taken notice of, making reference to the 159 response received of which 155 were against.

Councillor P. King, Cabinet Member for Neighbourhood Services and Transport, with permission speak, stated that the report was more to do with Traffic Restriction Orders (TROs) as opposed to consultation around proposals for car parking charging. He added that car parking charges had been talked about by several previous administrations for a very long time. So, this was not something that was trying to be "smuggled" in through the cover of Covid, with the decision to implement made just before the start of lockdown. The report therefore represented the legal side. In terms of engagement, the Cabinet Member stated that the Barry and District News was still functioning, and this had "very good coverage", so proposals were being published and circulated. Notices had also been erected at each location and on various notice boards as well as the Council's website. He outlined that he could not see what more the Council could do. The Cabinet Member stated that it was important to implement the proposals in order to preserve the country parks and he urged the Committee to recognise the distinction between the TROs and car parking charges.

A Committee Member stated that this had not been a fair consultation which had been undertaken at an inappropriate time, and at a time when people were being told to stay indoors. He stated that it was important for the consultation to be expanding and he gave his support to Councillor Driscoll's recommendation. He called for another effort to communicate these proposals and for the consultation to be reopened for a period of 8 weeks. This amendment was agreed by Councillor Driscoll. A Member referred to the mental health impact on residents due to the lockdown restrictions relating to the effects of charging for visiting country parks, asking for clarity regarding the timing of introduction of charges.

Councillor L. Burnett (Cabinet Member for Education and Regeneration), with permission to speak stated that she had received confirmation from the Communication Team of the amount of information provided to the public. This included numerous press reports and social media posts. The only thing missing was a notice in the Gem which had ceased operating. It was also important to recognise that the number of social media hits went to an all-time high. She therefore questioned whether fewer people saw the information. Finally, the Cabinet Member clarified that proposals for the country parks would not be introduced until Covid-19 restrictions had been lifted and the issue of displacement parking had been dealt with. Proposals for Wyndham Street and the Town Hall car park in Cowbridge mention introduction from 1st April 2021 unless the Covid-19 restrictions were still in place, in which case, charges would not be implemented until local restrictions had been lifted. This was the Cabinet's resolution.

In being asked to vote, the motion to reopen the consultation for a period of 8 weeks with a new round of communication with the public was not carried.

Subsequently it was

RECOMMENDED – T H A T the motion to reopen the consultation for a period of 8 weeks with a new round of communication with the public, be not supported by the Environment and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee.

Reason for recommendation

Following a vote on the motion by the Environment and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee.

Minutes - GD