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## ENVIRONMENT AND REGENERATION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of a Hybrid Meeting held on 12<sup>th</sup> November, 2024.

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

The recording of the meeting is available [here](#).

Present: Councillor S. Lloyd-Selby (Chair); Councillor C. Iannucci-Williams (Vice-Chair); Councillors C.E.A. Champion, P. Drake, V.P. Driscoll, A.M. Ernest, M.J. Hooper, J.M. Norman, E. Penn, J. Protheroe and S.T. Wiliam.

Also present: Councillors C.P. Franks, W.A. Hennessy, G. John (Cabinet Member for Leisure, Sport and Wellbeing), C. Stallard and M.R. Wilson (Cabinet Member for Neighborhood and Building Services).

### ANNOUNCEMENT –

Prior to the commencement of the business of the Committee, the Chair 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”.

### MINUTES –

RECOMMENDED – T H A T the minutes of the meeting held on 22<sup>nd</sup> October, 2024 be approved as a correct record.

### DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST –

No declarations of interest were received.

### REVISED HIGHWAY MAINTENANCE THREE YEAR RESURFACING PLAN 2024 – 2027 (REF) –

The reference from Cabinet of 24<sup>th</sup> October, 2024 as contained within the agenda was presented by the Neighbourhood Manager, Neighbourhood Services Operations (Highway Maintenance). The purpose of the report was to advise on the changes used to identify priority locations for resurfacing works as part of seeking agreement to the plan for 2024 – 2027.

The Neighbourhood Manager provided a short presentation to the Committee, in order to highlight the key areas and points covered by the report and Plan. This included the legislative and statutory framework as well as the obligations behind the

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Council's requirement to maintain the County's highways, through to the need to make amendments to the Council's Scoring Matrix for resurfacing following on from the review (attached to Appendix B of the reference / report) and following on from previous feedback that Active Travel needed to be incorporated within it. Active Travel and the positive developments around this within the Vale were also touched upon. The various types of highway maintenance were also described, where the priority was on the least amount of disruption to residents and road users as possible and the use of various types of resurfacing materials and processes, particularly newer sustainable and environmentally responsible surfaces dressings which were both effective in terms of maintenance of highways and cost or value for money.

The Committee was also informed about a typographical error at paragraph 2.9 of the report, concerning the revenue budget provided for patching across the Vale of Glamorgan, which should be £850k, not £200k, as stated in the report.

Following the presentation, the following questions and comments were raised.

Councillor Protheroe referred to a new highway surface material being piloted by the Vale of Glamorgan Council (as advertised by the Council on social media) which was sustainable, locally sourced, used recycled materials and helped meet its carbon net zero obligations. It was explained that this had been used previously by Cardiff Council and it was felt this could be an extremely beneficial surface material, which had been trialled already within the County, namely at Skomer Road, Barry. This material used recycled steel and asphalt steel aggregate sourced from the Cardiff area. This had a five-year maintenance period or lifecycle, and the Council was keen to monitor its success and its application in other locations in the County.

On the follow up question on this material being, if successfully piloted, the surface material of choice for highways within the Council area going forward, it was explained that the contractor used for this was not on the relevant contractor / highway framework and were highly bespoke and specialist, meaning that this surface would not necessarily be applied through the whole of the Vale, but rather be expanded to more localised areas. On the Chair's related query on how long the trial for using this material would be, it was explained that this was a short-term trial, which was already yielding positive results, helping to contribute to net zero objectives and competitively priced.

The Vice-Chair asked about procedures around footway resurfacing and whether residents should be notified in advance in order that they can move their vehicles so that the relevant surfaces can be done in one go rather than on multiple occasions. It was explained that the relevant contractors should be contacting local residents via a mail drop, etc. prior to resurfacing works being undertaken and this would be looked into and raised with them. It was also stressed that should contractors need to reattend an area to complete a resurfacing of roads, paths, etc. this did not incur further costs to the Council nor residents.

Councillor Ernest referred to the part of the report which covered changes and recommendations to update the matrix in order to include active travel with both bus and cycle routes added. This encompassed roads which were not always as well maintained or in as good condition as others and asked if this could be addressed. It

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was explained that public transport / school transport was noted within the proposed scoring Matrix but it was also in the previous scoring Matrix as well and the weightings were exactly the same, with a key contributing factor now being active travel as well.

Councillor William and the Chair also led the Committee in thanking the Highway Maintenance Team in their resurfacing work in areas such as Park Crescent in Barry.

Councillor Norman asked what the Council intended to do with regard to the current poor state of some walkways and pavements in areas such as Llantwit Major (i.e. missing or cracked paving stones, etc.). The Chair added that she would like information on how local residents could report damaged walkways, pavements, etc., to the Authority as she appreciated that regular inspections of all such surfaces by the Council was not always possible. It was explained that the Council had four Highway Inspectors that undertook these routine inspections of these surfaces, covering 2,590 unique Street references. The frequency of such inspections had overall increased in most areas. Regarding the issues at Llantwit Major, a large factor in this was the constant inappropriate parking on pavements, despite the efforts of inspectors to detect these and put in works orders to repair them. This trend could also be seen in other parts of the Vale. It was advised that should residents identify any damage or defects with paving and other surfaces, they could contact the Council, such as logging a fault on the Council's online customer portal. It was important that the Council with partners, such as South Wales Police, had the powers needed to enforce appropriate parking on local footways in order to help preserve these.

Councillor Hooper welcomed the report and Plan, particularly with reference to the recommendations that had been taken on board from the Committee, such as the inclusion of Active Travel routes. On his question about the introduction of the 20mph speed limit and if there had been any discernible impact on local roads, it was explained that it was too soon to say whether there had been an impact or not, particularly as it was only the speed of motor vehicles that had been affected rather than their weight or the routes they were using.

Councillor Hooper also referred to the weighting given to "defects in cycling desire line" as part of the Carriageway Resurfacing Prioritisation Scoring Matrix (Appendix B to the report). He felt that the weighting for this was insufficient and did not adequately reflect the potential damage or harm to the cyclist if they were to hit a pothole or some other defect in a highway, etc. It was subsequently explained that cyclists may use a range of surfaces to cycle, depending on what they were comfortable with, not just the highway or carriageway, but consideration could be given to changing the weighting as the matrix evolves. Also, for those routes used by cyclists that fell under Active Travel, these would get additional points and weighting therefore increasing their priority under the matrix.

On Councillor Ernest's queries around the matrix on Appendix B, the scoring and the routes involved, it was suggested that these would be covered by the relevant engineer's assessment and such specific queries would be addressed outside of this meeting separately.

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Finally, the Cabinet Member for Neighbourhood and Building Services spoke, thanking the Committee for their comments and recommendations on the report and Plan. He added that he was pleased to see that the comments made by the Committee with regard to this topic had been taken on board (i.e. Active Travel routes in the scoring / matrix). The changes outlined in the report were timely, due to changes in the Highway Code and to road speed limits.

It was subsequently

RECOMMENDED –

(1) T H A T the typographical error at paragraph 2.9 of the report, concerning the revenue budget provided for patching across the Vale of Glamorgan, be amended from £200k, as stated in the report, to the correct figure of £850k.

(2) T H A T Vale of Glamorgan Council officers would review, in a year's time, the weighting given to "defects in cycling desire line" as part of the Carriageway Resurfacing Prioritisation Scoring Matrix (Appendix B to the report).

(3) T H A T the Highway Maintenance Three Year Resurfacing Plan 2024 – 2027 be noted.

#### Reasons for recommendations

(1) In order that the details concerning patching within the revenue budget provided were accurate.

(2) To ensure that the appropriate weighting was given for defects in the cycling desire line as part of the Carriageway Resurfacing Prioritisation Scoring Matrix and the Engineers' assessment. This was in order to reflect the potential impact on cyclist(s) due to such defects existing.

(3) Having regard to the contents of the reference, report and discussions at the meeting, prior to it being formally agreed and to enable the final Plan to be approved following its consideration by the Committee, there being no comments that affected the Plan, as proposed, having been received.

#### COASTAL MONITORING UPDATE (DEH) –

The report, presented by the Engineering Manager – Environment, was intended to update the Committee on monitoring of the coastline with regard to flood and coastal erosion risk management.

A presentation, accompanying the report, was given to the Committee outlining the key areas and updates, such as the makeup of the Vale of Glamorgan coastline, the strategic context, the projected impact of climate change, coastal erosion and flood risks to the County, as well as the role of the Wales Coastal Monitoring Centre (WCMC), the various data sets collated, monitored and analysed as part of this, through to recent surveys undertaken, coastal asset monitoring and future

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monitoring aims, with the monitoring results being used to inform the long-term management of the coastline by providing a long-term consistent and routine evidence-base to inform the delivery of Shoreline Management Plan policies and monitoring, as well as, where appropriate, help inform any requirement for changes to the Shoreline Management Plan (SMP) policy.

Also of interest was that the strategic long-term monitoring of the Wales coastline for flood and coastal risk management was now funded and delivered on behalf of the Welsh Maritime Local Authorities by the Wales Coastal Monitoring Centre (WCMC), funded directly by Welsh Government.

Following the presentation of the report, there were a number of comments and queries raised, which included the following.

Councillor Wiliam referred to the ongoing inspections of Jackson's Bay and the Knap, and asked whether, due to the regular rockfalls at Jackson's Bay, it was now eligible for new signage to highlight this danger to visitors. It was explained that there had recently been a meeting between the Council and a local voluntary group to help clear the beach and improve the area and as part of this a signage audit had been undertaken. Following local resident concerns and feedback raised by the audit, the intention was to install new signage in early 2025. On the Councillor's query about any discernible patterns from surveying beaches regarding sand loss in areas such as Whitmore and Jackson's Bay due to dredging and erosion, the response was that there had been no indication so far of any significant 'rebound' in sand levels since dredging had been curtailed. However, there had not been any further significant decline in this area. Further surveying would be undertaken over the coming years to expand knowledge of how much material was held in these areas and thereby calculate the movement of this.

On Councillor Wiliam's follow up questions on the nature of bathymetric surveys, the testing for sewage and whether any surveying or testing was undertaken on potential radiation levels in the water sampling on the County's coast, it was explained that the former survey consisted of measuring the height or the depth of the seabed in order to generate a Terrain model. Testing for sewage in water samples fell under the remit of Natural Resources Wales. On radiation levels, the Council was not undertaking this in terms of testing water quality.

On Councillor Champion's query on the impact of projected sea level rises in future on low level land in the Vale of Glamorgan (i.e. Aberthaw Power Station), the response was that sea level rise was not a linear process but rather an accelerating curve and based on the current data and projections available, areas such as Aberthaw would not be significantly impacted for some considerable time into the future.

On the Chair's follow up query around monitoring of coastal areas at risk of coastal erosion / flooding and whether there were any pre-emptive measures in place to address these potential risks, it was explained that this depended on which part of the coastal area was impacted and who the relevant asset owner was. The Council worked with various owners, partners and stakeholders along the coast to help address and deal with flood risks, maintenance and funding of flood defences, etc.,

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in conjunction with the relevant risk management authorities in accordance with the SMP policy and the latest sea level / flooding data.

Councillor Protheroe queried how this risk-based methodology was applied and whether there was monitoring undertaken of the Western Vale's coastline, which did experience regular cliff falls and erosion. In response, it was confirmed that some monitoring was undertaken for the western coastline, but this was not on a regular basis, due to the current scoring criteria on risk for this area, prioritisation of higher risk areas and considerations on funding and resources. This meant there was a reliance on cost effective technologies (such as the use of drone technology) and engagement with local coastal groups to help supplement monitoring in the Western Vale. The Chair added how could local residents in the Western Vale report cliff falls to the Council. The options available to residents included contacting the Council's customer service call centre (C1V) where their report would be assessed and dealt with accordingly, i.e., if appropriate, then signage could be put in place.

On the Chair's question on how the Council could address the ongoing issue of visitors at various parts of the coastline sitting directly under cliff edges and the associated risk with this, it was explained that signage had been put in place wherever possible to address this by the Council, but this only applied to areas owned by the Council and not on privately owned land, etc. where the Council did not have any liabilities nor permission to put signage on such land. The Chair suggested that local Ward Members would be best placed to inform the Council of such risks in their areas. This was an area of concern also raised by the Cabinet Member for Leisure, Sport and Wellbeing with regards to Llantwit Major beach, despite adequate signage being put in place there and the overall efforts of the Council to address this at the location.

Councillor Ernest referred to the significant cliff falls, etc. occurring in and around the Penarth area and coastline and what assurances the Council could give to residents living in these areas with little or no mitigations being in place and the moving back of fence lines on local clifftops. In response, the Council had direct contact with those residents who were immediately impacted by cliff falls and erosion. Those areas that did not have defences installed would be allowed to erode naturally, with the focus on those key areas that had defences already in place. The Natural Resources Wales website showed the coastal erosion risk management mapping and predictions on the average rate of erosion on the coastline. Currently properties in such areas would not be impacted directly but possibly gardens and outlying areas of land near to their properties in the medium to long term would be. Individual residents could contact the Council if they required further information and reassurance on the impact to their properties etc. due to nearby coastal erosion. Unfortunately, funding was not available for all coastal areas to receive additional protection and defences. In addition, another benefit of monitoring the coastline was to ensure that current predictions on erosion were as accurate as possible, plus this helped with liaising with partner agencies, etc. concerning the position of the fence line.

It was subsequently

**RECOMMENDED – T H A T** the current programme of coastal monitoring be noted.

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Reason for recommendation

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

6 MONTH UPDATE REPORT ON LOCAL BUS SERVICES IN THE VALE OF GLAMORGAN (DEH) –

Following a report presented to this Committee on 16<sup>th</sup> April, 2024, it was requested that a further update report on bus services in the Vale of Glamorgan be presented in six months' time.

The latest report, presented by the Council's Operational Manager Transport Services, updated the Committee on changes that had been made to the bus network since April 2024.

A presentation outlining the key areas of the report and update was given to the Committee, which included topics such as current, awarded contracts and funding, accessibility of bus timetables, regional partnership working (Cardiff Capital Region City Deal), connections between homes, hospitals, and bus interchanges, the Local Development Plan and future bus routes, through to the reintroduction of Greenlinks G1 service, as well as future funding and commercial services to ensure the sustainability of bus routes and services within the Vale of Glamorgan.

Following the presentation, a number of comments and queries were raised at the committee meeting, including the following.

Councillor Hooper raised a query about the Barry Docks and Cogan interchanges as well as the inability so far to secure adequate provision to support local school bus and transport services and how the Council could help, such as through contact with Welsh Government, as he felt that this was a 'Cinderella service' in terms of funding, resources and support. On Councillor Hooper's point on school bus services, he referred to specifically the route between Barry Island and Whitmore High School. The concern was to see better integration between school and local bus services which would give pupils more options and get them used to travelling on public transport from a young age. Regarding the interchange(s), two bus services were running to the Docks. For Cogan, this was on the 'aspirational' list and the Council was working with the Cardiff Capital Region City Deal on a route or transport scheme prioritisation tool, and further progress would be shared with the Committee in due course. On the school bus services, this had been run by a commercial provider and the challenge faced was that this was not a statutory duty for the Council and getting interest from alternative providers had proved difficult. Councillor Hooper urged the Committee to help lobby the Council concerning the importance of school bus services for children's safety and welfare, particularly during the Winter period. The Operational Manager Transport Services explained that a survey was undertaken with Vale residents on bus services and what they want from these in order to discuss these with service providers. However, any changes would require additional funding in order to realise them, but this was not currently available. Such

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comments or recommendations from the Committee on this topic would need to go to Cabinet for consideration, particularly around extra funding.

Councillor Ernest raised the need for greater connectivity in terms of bus services between Penarth and Barry Hospital. In response, there were no specific plans around this and other routes at this time. Decision making on such routes would form part of the franchise of bus services when Welsh Government or Transport for Wales would have full control of them. The Operational Manager Transport Services would look into what connections and bus services were available for this route and share with the Councillor.

The Vice-Chair asked if the Council was collating figures concerning the numbers of people using bus services in the Vale in order to get a better sense of their viability in the future (including free services that had been introduced for the summer months). The Chair added to this by asking how such figures were determined and whether it was the Council or the bus service providers who monitored this. It was explained that as part of the agreement with the bus network grant, operators had to provide such data to Welsh Government. The Council was not privy to all of this data due to this being confidential at the moment. However, the idea behind this data collation was finding a point where it could be decided whether a service would be commercially viable or not again because the Council was helping to fund these services that were previously commercial. The Council worked with regional Partners in Southeast Wales to look at cost per head for bus services / use and whether this was going up or going down in rural and urban areas. The cost was usually higher in rural areas, but bus services here formed an essential service for these parts of the Vale. Due to the use of S106 funding, the use of free bus services in the Vale were directly monitored by the Council. The Chair was surprised that despite the Council putting in around £500k into non-commercial bus routes, it did not have access to all the information available in order that the Council understood whether the routes involved had the potential to become commercially viable again so that efforts could be focused in those areas. The Committee therefore asked that Cabinet used its discussions at various levels of Welsh Government in order to highlight greater data sharing and the other comments / issues raised.

Councillor Protheroe supported the Chair and Vice-Chair's comments, adding that it was important to further promote the use of buses as part of sustainable travel and therefore it was essential to have a baseline or benchmark through access to the relevant data in order to quantify the numbers of users for bus services and to build upon this. The Councillor had welcomed the use of the free bus services in the Rural Vale and felt that funding via the Cardiff Capital Region City Deal for a strategy to help rural areas in the region (including the Vale) where buses were the only means of public transport should be used. This could take a similar approach to that taken with the revival of the G1 Greenlinks bus service. The Chair mentioned that the regional group had set up a working group to look at transportation issues, such as the ones the Councillor had raised. The Operational Manager Transport Services stated that ideally the aim would be greater interconnectivity between bus and train services with shared ticketing as part of franchising and increased public transport links to rural and urban areas.



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Councillor Hooper stressed the importance of bus services for both urban and rural areas of the Vale, as in both cases there may not be high car ownership nor access to train stations in some of these areas, as well as the benefits for younger people, including school transport. It was important for the Committee to lobby the Council in helping to boost such services.

Councillor Wiliam welcomed the idea of shared ticketing between bus and train services and the resulting interoperability between these services, as well as applying the practice seen in some Welsh local authorities of bus and train timetables matching each other in the Vale.

The Cabinet Member for Neighbourhood and Building Services referred to the importance of integrating bus and train services, to improve infrastructure and help lower road traffic accidents. He would feed back to the relevant Cabinet Member for public transport the Committee's views, in order to complement the recommendations the Committee would send back to Cabinet.

It was subsequently

RECOMMENDED –

(1) T H A T the following comments be referred to Cabinet:

- The Committee supported and commended the work undertaken by Vale of Glamorgan Council officers in order to address the continuing challenges around the provision of local buses that met residents' needs;
- The Committee was concerned about the inability so far to secure adequate provision to support local school bus and transport services;
- The Committee was also concerned about the discussions that were happening around passenger numbers between bus service providers and Welsh Government which were not being shared with the Council. The Committee therefore asked that Cabinet used its discussions at various levels of Welsh Government in order to highlight greater data sharing and the other comments/issues raised.

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

(3) T H A T a further report be provided to Committee in December 2024 detailing the reintroduction of the Greenlinks G1 service.

#### Reasons for recommendations

(1) In order for Cabinet to consider the comments made by the Committee, and to consider discussing these with Welsh Government, particularly around information sharing on passenger numbers on Vale of Glamorgan bus services, given that the Council was a significant funder of bus services. Therefore, it was a matter of concern because it was important that the Council understood whether the routes

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involved had the potential to become commercially viable again so that efforts could be focused in those areas, particularly in order to further promote the use of buses.

- (2) Having regard to the contents of the report and discussions at the meeting.
- (3) To update Committee on the Greenlinks service.