

No.

## ENVIRONMENT AND REGENERATION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of a Remote Meeting held on 11<sup>th</sup> March, 2025.

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

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

Present: Councillors 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 J. Aviet, B.E. Brooks (Deputy Leader and Cabinet member for Sustainable Places), L. Burnett (Executive Leader and Cabinet Member for Performance and Resources), G. John (Cabinet Member for Leisure, Sport and Wellbeing) and E. Williams (Cabinet Member for Social Care and Health).

### 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 –

(1) T H A T the minutes of the meetings held on 14<sup>th</sup> January and 11<sup>th</sup> February, 2025 be approved as a correct record.

(2) T H A T the minutes of the Special meeting held on 28<sup>th</sup> January, 2025 be approved as a correct record subject to the following amendments:

- On page 7 of the minutes of the Special Meeting of the Committee on the 28<sup>th</sup> January, 2025 reference to the car parks, in the rural, Western, Vale and the request for confirmation of the Council’s engagement and public consultation with the local communities and relevant stakeholders in relation to the service design of these (Portabello and West Farm), as promised, should have been attributed to Councillor Protheroe and not Councillor Penn.
- Also on page 7 of the minutes, with reference to the Vice-Chair’s contribution and proposal for further research, with an up-to-date survey of users of Court Road car park and other stakeholders being

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required, mention should have been made of her suggestion that this be over a 3 month period.

#### DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST –

No declarations of interest were received.

#### ANNUAL DELIVERY PLAN MONITORING REPORT: QUARTER 3 PERFORMANCE 2024/25 (DP) –

The performance report, presented by the Director of Place (with support from the Director of Environment and Housing), detailed the Council's progress at Quarter 3 (Q3) (1<sup>st</sup> April to 31<sup>st</sup> December, 2024) towards achieving its Annual Delivery Plan (2024/25) commitments as aligned to its Corporate Plan Well-being Objectives.

The Director of Place shared a presentation with Members, appended at Appendix A to the report, which offered a summary or 'snapshot' of overall progress against the Council's Annual Delivery Plan (ADP) commitments for 2024/25 as aligned to the 4 Corporate Plan Well-being Objectives and with regard to the remit of the Environment and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee (this was following a proof of concept using the Council's existing Corporate Performance Framework of measures and actions to develop its use of Power BI to support performance reporting). The snapshot included:

- Overall and Committee specific RAG statuses, including actions and measures RAG statuses by well-being objective;
- What the Council had achieved (Committee specific overview);
- Exception reporting for the Committee: actions and measures;
- Areas for improvement: Service Plan activity;
- Emerging areas of development and activity;
- Emerging areas of concern.

The report sought Elected Members' consideration of Q3 performance results and the proposed remedial actions to address areas of identified underperformance. Upon consideration, the Scrutiny Committee was recommended to refer their views and any recommendations to Cabinet for their consideration.

During the presentation, several Members raised comments and queries, which included the following.

The Chair asked about funding for both the Long-Term Towns Project and the Levelling Up project for Barry, which had been approved, in terms of any update on timescales for receipt of that funding. She also referred to the Transforming Towns funding for 2025/26 and 2026/27 and the significant work being undertaken, and if there were any updates on the progress being made with this. In response, it was explained that the Long-Term Towns Project had been renamed to the 'Plan for Neighbourhoods', with notification being provided for this project in the previous week, and a new guidance document setting out the process around the new

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procedures. This would require a review of the governing board for the project and the related procedures, which would add to the timescale for it and push it back slightly. There was some funding proposed for the 2025/26 period, aimed at setting up the partnership around this initiative. This would properly commence in 2026/27, with a report to be produced for Cabinet and Scrutiny, setting out the updated timescales for the project. The key focus for the project would be to strengthen communities. Similarly, the Levelling Up project had been renamed to “Barry Making Waves”, with work ongoing between the Council and its partners in order to facilitate a new plan around delivery, impacted and delayed as it had been due to the UK General Election, which had set back funding for this. The Council was looking to get agreement with the UK Government on the funding stream, with the end of March 2028 being the new timetable.

Councillor Protheroe stated that she was pleased to see the Council was on track to hit its 70% recycling target and to see the income that it generated from the separated waste that was collected not only had a value, but the Council had actually increased the income that it got from it. She thought that residents would be pleased to know that it was working but wondered how much money the Council was generating as an income from that separated recycled waste. It was explained that the Council last year took approximately £1.4m from recycling sales, but this was subject to the changing and fluctuating of recycling markets year on year and this service was costly to deliver. The money generated from the sales went back into service in order to help run it.

Councillor Protheroe also asked about the sustainable alternative sewage system for residents at Channel View, Marcross and the potential private funding available to help with this ongoing issue. The Director of Environment and Housing had recently spoken with the local Community Council about this and the cost of the replacement scheme for those households affected, which was excessive. He subsequently arranged a survey to establish why the Croft John sewage system, which was comparable to Marcross’, was much cheaper to empty than the latter. The suspicion was that other water was entering into the system. The survey work was now complete, and the Director would be meeting the engineers involved with this work on 19<sup>th</sup> March to go through the details on this. Subsequently, he would meet with the local Ward Members and residents to discuss options, including the possibility of having individual treatment works for each resident property at Marcross or looking at how to get the costs down for the conventional arrangements currently in place. On private funding for the system, the Director was not aware of any at this time, but such sources of funding were welcome.

Councillor Hooper asked for more information on the Barry Making Waves project in terms of the negotiations with UK Government, and on the Plan for Neighbourhoods, and what the changes around this were. He also referred to the delays with the Levelling Up / Barry Making Waves and the Long-Term Towns / Plan for Neighbourhoods projects, the negative impact of inflation on these and the impact on their budgets which may then be insufficient due to this. In response, the new documentation for Barry Making Waves was currently being assessed, and that and the Plan for Neighbourhoods project had also been impacted by the General Election and the subsequent changes around these projects. These would take time to digest and to implement, coupled with operational factors, but further updates would

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be provided to Cabinet and Scrutiny in due course. As well as inflationary pressures, other factors had come into play which had delayed progress on these projects, but things had been progressed as quickly as they possibly could by the Council, with the aim that the Council would do its utmost to ensure the schemes could be delivered within the funding envelope. The ongoing negotiations with UK Government on the Barry Making Waves project centred around delivery and the timescales for this. The expectation was that the project would be completed by March 2028.

Councillor Hooper also made reference to the Greenlinks service and that no further commentary had been made in the report concerning the exception reporting on this. He also asked for more details on sustainable school transport. On Greenlinks, the issue raised around the lack of commentary would be taken back and more detail provided going forward. There was 'a lot to say' about this service, with a report on this matter having recently gone to Cabinet, and with journeys via this service steadily increasing, although these were still below pre-COVID-19 levels. On school transport, there was a considerable overspend in this area which would be addressed, and the Council (including a specific group set up to look at school transport) was working to come up with a range of measures aimed at improving School transport thereby reducing the operating costs and improve getting local children to school and the reliability of doing that. Further updates would be coming to Cabinet and the Committee on this area in due course.

Councillor Hooper referred to Objective 4, emerging areas of concern, and the lack of resources internally to project manage multiple public open space schemes. He raised the issues around this at Baruc on the Waterfront, a public open space scheme that was managed by somebody other than the Council, and asked what the Council was doing to support residents there to get things done on those open spaces that still had not been finished and what it was doing to put pressure on the private party concerned. The Director of Place explained that this part of the report was referring to what resources the Council had to deliver the large number of open space improvements that it was trying to deliver across the next 12 months. The Council did not have the manpower or resources to project manage these as well. The Waterfront was managed by a private company on behalf of the consortium involved, but the Council continued to meet regularly with the consortium around the delivery of the Waterfront itself and the delivery of some of the open spaces associated with that. The Council was aware there were significant ongoing issues around maintenance of the open spaces, etc., and the Council had provided advice to the local residents' group on how to take their concerns forward, which they were doing so on a formal basis by way of a complaint to the company managing the spaces concerned. It was important that the Council continued to engage with the consortium to help put pressure on it in order to get these issues resolved in conjunction with the legal action, etc., undertaken by the local residents.

On Councillor Hooper's final point about a further report on the differences between Levelling Up / Barry Making Waves and the Long-Term Towns / Plan for Neighbourhoods projects, this was addressed by the Chair, who stated that this could be looked at outside of the meeting, operationally, by being included in the ADP report for Quarter 4 and, if appropriate, by separate scheduled reports on the Committee's Work Programme, to be shared with the Committee in due course.

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Councillor Ernest raised the part of the presentation and report concerning the Council's work with Passenger Transport operators under Objective 4 (emerging areas of development and activity), adding his concerns about the quality of train services from Penarth to Cardiff and elsewhere, which had been subject to numerous cancellations and re-routing. He asked what the Council could do about this, and what contacts it had with Transport for Wales. It was explained that the Council's Operational Manager for Transport Services was regularly in contact with Transport for Wales and engaged with them on a number of areas. The issues raised by the Councillor did not form part of the Council's functions, but these would be shared with Transport for Wales to look at on the Council's behalf.

There being no further comments or questions, and after considering the report, the Committee subsequently

RECOMMENDED –

(1) T H A T the Q3 performance results and progress towards achieving the Annual Delivery Plan 2024/25 commitments as aligned to the Vale of Glamorgan Council's Corporate Plan Wellbeing Objectives within the remit of the Committee be noted.

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

Reason for recommendations

(1&2) Having regard to the contents of the report and appendices, as well as the discussions at the meeting and following consideration by Committee Members of the report.

MATTER WHICH THE CHAIR HAD DECIDED WAS URGENT -

RESOLVED – T H A T the following matter which the Chair had decided was urgent for the reason given beneath the minute heading be considered.

LEISURE OPPORTUNITIES AT COUNTRYSIDE SERVICE SITES (REF) – **(Matter which the Chair had decided was urgent by reason of the need to ensure that the Committee could consider the report, and any comments / recommendations made by the Committee could be referred back to Cabinet for consideration, prior to any final agreement with the relevant leisure operators which would be required by 1st April, 2025).**

Cabinet on 6<sup>th</sup> March, 2025 had referred the report to Scrutiny Committee for consideration prior to any final agreement with the relevant Leisure operators.

No.

The reference / report was presented to the Committee by the Director of Place, the purpose of which was for Committee to consider the proposed pilot for an on-water aqua leisure activity with a third-party operator on the eastern lake at Cosmeston Country Park, which would build on and supplement existing activities at the location. This was prior to the final negotiations and agreement with the relevant Leisure operators which would be required by 1<sup>st</sup> April, 2025.

The Director of Place summarised the key points of the reference / report as follows:

- The importance of green and blue spaces and in particular the Country Parks at Cosmeston and Porthkerry was recognised by the Council and ensuring the long-term future of these spaces was considered crucial, particularly having regard to the experience gained during the recent pandemic and to ensure that such places and the important nature and ecology found within them could be protected for future generations. The changing way that these spaces were used was also recognised with a focus on offering leisure activities to users of the park as well as maintaining the spaces as green areas.
- Recognition that as part of the current placemaking work underway in all four main towns in the Vale of Glamorgan and more specifically, Penarth, summertime leisure activities had been identified as important to users of the park as part of the current consultation exercise.
- The Council had been approached by a leisure operator who would like to explore the opportunity of using part of the eastern lake at Cosmeston Country Park for water-based activities from May 2025 through to September 2025 to test the suitability of the location.
- The report sought approval to negotiate and complete a licence agreement for a maximum term of 20 weeks, through the summer months to pilot the proposal for an aqua leisure use to be operated within the eastern lake at Cosmeston Country park which could provide income to support the protection and future development of the Country parks with a focus on maintaining green and blue space and nature conservation.
- The request was also made to further explore opportunities for the future use of the medieval village buildings to financially support the continued operation of the country parks.

Following the presentation of the urgent item, several comments and questions were raised at the meeting, which included the following.

Councillor Norman asked what provisions would be in place to protect wildlife during the pilot, due to the abundance of bird species that nested around the area, including Geese and Swans. It was explained that the area was designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), including its use by overwintering birds. The Council's Countryside and Ecology Services officers had confirmed that summer activities at the location should not impact the existing wildlife there. Also, the Council would require the approval of Natural Resources Wales before the relevant activities could take place. Previously such approval had been granted to operators subject to specific conditions, i.e. the washing of equipment used in local summer activities (such as boats) to ensure no biohazards and alien species could be transferred into the lake and local natural habitats.

No.

The Chair asked what activities would be offered by the operator as part of the proposed pilot. It was explained that these included an on-water assault course, with slides, climbing frames and inflatable equipment situated on the lake within a specific location, to be marked off.

Councillor Ernest raised his concerns on the impact of the proposed activities on Cosmeston Country Park as a whole, including walkers and local wildlife. He also asked about the fees to be charged at the location as a consequence of this pilot and how any potential 'conflict' between the pilot activities and its users, with walkers, other users of the park and local wildlife would be addressed. Regarding the fees, it was explained that the fees would be for the operator of the leisure activities concerned to decide what to charge and therefore not the Council. The Council was in negotiations with the potential operator of the leisure activities to see if the Council could receive an income from siting the leisure activities at the lake. On wildlife protection, the intention was for the area to be used to be marked out and this would be away from the most ecologically important areas. As part of this, there would be a number of conditions as part of the operator's license to ensure that wildlife, the public etc. in the locality were not adversely impacted.

Councillor Penn raised several comments / queries about water quality monitoring at the lake during the trial period, the need for strict enforcement on no access to the western Lake, to encourage the potential operator of these activities to recruit staff locally, i.e. Barry and Penarth, as well as referring to the detail in the report around ongoing Placemaking work in Penarth which had identified that those consulted as part of the process felt there was a lack of leisure opportunities, particularly in the summer period for younger residents and the opportunity to address this by the operator offering lower rates / concessions to young people. In response to these queries / comments, it was explained that the water quality at the location was tested regularly. On restrictions on leisure activities on the western lake, these already existed and would be strictly maintained during the pilot in question, due to the ecological importance of the western lake. Activities would only be undertaken on the eastern lake in a specified area only. The operator would be focusing on recruiting and training staff locally, which had also been their approach when they had been operating in Cardiff Bay, where they had recruited staff from Penarth, etc. and this would be applied to the proposed site at Cosmeston as well. On concessions, the operator had previously offered these to younger persons both individually and through bodies such as schools in order to use their facilities at reduced group rates, and the expectation was that this would continue at Cosmeston.

Councillor Norman asked about the supervision of the proposed activities at the eastern lake, and whether these would be fully supervised. She also queried whether the staff recruited for this work would be qualified lifeguards / lifesavers. In response, it was explained that both the activities and the site itself would be monitored for both the safety of users and to ensure there was no use of the facilities, the lake or the park after hours. Employees would receive a high level of safety training, including lifesaving skills, which were required by the operator as part of their insurance requirements.

No.

Councillor Protheroe felt this was a positive development but also queried what investment the potential operator for the pilot would be putting into this. She also asked that, following the initial pilot period, whether there would be some kind of open tendering process for the operator and other interested providers for longer term use should the pilot be successful. In addition, she asked for confirmation on whether the relevant due diligence around safety had been undertaken and what the next steps would be following this pilot. In response to these comments and queries, it was explained that the key purpose of the pilot was to see how these activities would work at the location and what the impact would be in terms of both upsides and downsides over the summer season. The intention was that following the pilot period, i.e. in September, a full evaluation and report would be produced in order to see whether it would be appropriate to open for tender for these activities at Cosmeston for another season, with the opportunity to have a longer-term contract and investment in place, for at least ten years, with more permanent facilities, fixtures and fittings being in place. On due diligence, the proposed operator for the pilot already ran three leisure activity facilities, two of these being on lakes and the other at Cardiff Bay, which had all been successful. However, with the Cardiff Bay venture they were looking to relocate to Cosmeston Country Park due to the water quality at the Bay which was limiting access to activities for users. This had in turn provided the Council with an opportunity to assess, test and pilot the impact of such activities at Cosmeston and, if appropriate, the opportunity to bid for the longer-term tender would be offered to both the operator and other providers.

Councillor Hooper reiterated the need for due diligence on this proposal and on the operator, as well as the need to address the appropriateness and suitability of the location to having such activities being undertaken there. He also referred to the text in the report about funding opportunities around this pilot, and whether these were substantial and if they had been included in the Council's budget which had recently been signed off, as well as the reason for the report and proposal coming to Committee now. It was explained that the pilot would help to test the appropriateness of these activities at the park, it being noted that the proposed operator for the pilot had run these activities at similar sites successfully. On funding opportunities, these would be impacted due to the short notice of the provider moving to Cosmeston and so such funding, other financial benefits and income opportunities would come, and be more effective and beneficial, in the longer term, should the pilot prove successful, and these would help support the park.

The Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Sustainable Places sought to reassure the Committee about the proposals and pilot, with discussions being held with the park's team and the operator to protect the lakes, park, other users and the wider ecology of the area as part of this proposal and to minimise the impact of the activities and facilities on these. It was also important, however, to look at the benefits of expanding access and activities for leisure, particularly for younger people, following the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, in a safe and controlled environment with a proven operator to implement and supervise these activities. Following the 20-week pilot, a report would go back to Cabinet and Scrutiny to assess and to allow for discussion of the pilot.



No.

There being no further comments or questions, and after considering the reference and report, the Committee subsequently

RECOMMENDED – T H A T, following consideration of the report, the Committee refer the following comments back to Cabinet for their consideration prior to any final agreement with the relevant leisure operators:

- As part of the final agreement, consideration be given to no access to the western lake at Cosmeston Country Park being enforced with regard to leisure activities;
- Every step be taken to protect the ecological diversity and wildlife at Cosmeston Country Park;
- The Committee welcomed and encouraged the proposed leisure operator's intention to create and recruit for jobs locally as part of this pilot scheme and period;
- The Committee asked that affordability be considered as a key part of the discussions with the provider and that further consideration be given to offering concessions to appropriate users of the leisure activities proposed;
- It was important that a balance was maintained between the proposed leisure activities and those that were already being undertaken and enjoyed by users of the park, as much as possible;
- The Council should ensure that the appropriate due diligence, adequate supervision, training and security were undertaken and provided as part of the agreement with the provider and their operation of leisure activities at this location during the pilot.

#### Reason for recommendation

To ensure that the Committee's comments were referred back to Cabinet for their consideration prior to, and as part of, any final agreement with the relevant leisure operators which would be required by 1<sup>st</sup> April, 2025.