



HOUSING AND ENVIRONMENT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF THE MULTI-LOCATIONAL MEETING HELD IN PENALLTA HOUSE AND VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS ON TUESDAY, 13TH FEBRUARY 2024 AT 5.30 P.M.

PRESENT:

Councillor A. Whitcombe – Chair
Councillor S. Williams – Vice Chair

Councillors:

C. Bishop, M. Chacon-Dawson, R. Chapman, C. Cuss, D. T. Davies, T. Heron, A. Hussey, D. Ingram-Jones, A. McConnell, B. Owen, L. Phipps, H. Pritchard, and J. A Pritchard.

Cabinet Members:

Councillors, C. Morgan (Waste, Leisure, and Green Spaces) and P. Leonard (Planning and Public Protection).

Together with:

Officers: M. S. Williams (Director for Economy and Environment), R. Hartshorn (Head of Public Protection, Community and Leisure Services), J. Reynolds (Sports and Leisure Facilities Manager), J. Lougher (Sports and Leisure Development Manager), C. Edwards (Environmental Health Manager), J. Morgan (Trading Standards, Licensing and Registrars Manager), M. Jacques (Scrutiny Officer) and A. Jones (Committee Services Officer).

RECORDING, FILMING AND VOTING ARRANGEMENTS

The Chair reminded those present that the meeting was being live-streamed and recorded and would be made available following the meeting via the Council's website – [Click Here to View](#) Members were advised that voting on decisions would be taken via Microsoft Forms.

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors D. Cushing, M. James, and J. Rao.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Cllr H Pritchard declared a personal interest only on Agenda item 9 Allocation Criteria For Artificial Sports Pitches and The Ystrad Mynach Centre For Sporting Excellence, in that he was a Member of a Committee for a local football team. As this was a personal interest only there was no requirement for him to leave the meeting and he could take full part in the debate and vote.

Cllr C Bishop declared a personal interest only on Agenda item 10 Food Standards

Agency Audit Of The Caerphilly Food Law Enforcement Services, in that she worked at a café. As this was a personal interest only there was no requirement for her to leave the meeting and she could take full part in the debate and vote.

3. SPECIAL HOUSING AND ENVIRONMENT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE HELD ON 21ST NOVEMBER 2023.

It was moved and seconded that the minutes be approved as a correct record. By way of Microsoft Forms and verbal vote (and in noting there were 12 for, 1 against and 2 Abstentions) this was agreed by the majority present.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Housing and Environment Scrutiny Committee held on 21st November 2023 (minute nos. 1 – 5) be approved as a correct record.

4. HOUSING AND ENVIRONMENT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE HELD ON 12TH DECEMBER 2023.

It was moved and seconded that the minutes be approved as a correct record. By way of Microsoft Forms and verbal vote (and in noting there were 15 for, 0 against and 0 Abstentions) this was agreed unanimously.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Housing and Environment Scrutiny Committee held on 12th December 2023 (minute nos. 1 – 8) be approved as a correct record.

5. CALL-IN PROCEDURE

There had been no matters referred to the Scrutiny Committee in accordance with the call-in procedure.

6. HOUSING AND ENVIRONMENT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME

Mark Jacques (Scrutiny Officer) presented the report, which outlined details of the Housing and Environment Scrutiny Committee Forward Work Programme (FWP) for the period February 2024 to March 2024.

Members were asked to consider the FWP alongside the Cabinet work programme and suggest any changes prior to publication on the Council's website.

It was moved and seconded that the report recommendation be approved. By way of Microsoft Forms and verbal vote (and in noting there were 15 for, 0 against and 0 abstentions) this was unanimously agreed.

RESOLVED that the Forward Work Programme as appended to the meeting papers be published on the Council's website.

7. CABINET REPORTS

It was confirmed that there had been no requests for any of the Cabinet reports listed on the agenda to be brought forward for discussion at the meeting.

REPORTS OF OFFICERS

Consideration was given to the following reports which were taken in the following order.

8. PONTLLANFRAITH LEISURE CENTRE

The Cabinet Member for Waste, Leisure and Green Spaces introduced the report, which provided the Housing and Environment Scrutiny Committee with information on the outcome of a public consultation on a proposal for Pontllanfraith Leisure Centre to remain permanently closed, with sporting facilities at the adjacent Centre for Vulnerable Learners (CVL) including a 4-court sports hall, changing facilities, and a 3G pitch being made available for community use outside of school hours upon opening in Spring 2025. The proposal would also see use of the 3G pitch on the Pontllanfraith Leisure Centre site cease once the 3G pitch at the adjacent Centre for Vulnerable Learners is open for community use.

One Member asked about consultation on the requirements of sports clubs playing at the higher tiers at set times over weekends. The 3G pitches at Islwyn High School and Blackwood Comprehensive School do not currently meet the standard for Gwent County matches. The Sports and Leisure Facilities Manager gave assurances on the consultation with sports clubs and advised that weekend access at Islwyn High School would provide greater capacity for some of the higher tier matches.

A Member highlighted the 31% of previous users of Pontllanfraith Leisure Centre that responded to the consultation who have not accessed sport and leisure facilities since the centre closed. The Member expressed the view that people with families and older members of the community were discriminated against as alternative provision focussed on the evening which was a period when many people preferred to remain at home. The Head of Public Protection, Community and Leisure Services advised Members that alternative rather than identical provision of services was proposed in the report. It was also highlighted that these alternatives were a short distance from the Leisure Centre site and that the consultation showed that 75% of previous users that responded to the consultation indicated that they had used their car to get to the leisure facility.

One Member queried if the temporary closure of the Newbridge 3G pitch, along with the permanent closure of the one in Pontllanfraith, would have an impact on the offer of suitable surfaces across the County Borough. The Sports and Leisure Facilities Manager gave assurances on the availability of 3G pitches at the Centre for Vulnerable Learners and Islwyn High School and also pointed out that the closure of the pitch at Newbridge for upgrading was for a very short period of time to support an upgrade to the existing facility. Members also heard that many teams currently book half not full pitches for training purposes.

A Member questioned the assertion in the report that the indoor leisure space at Pontllanfraith Leisure Centre was closed as a result of the UK national lockdown in March 2020. The Member believed it was closed in August 2021 prior to be being used as a mass vaccination centre. The Head of Public Protection, Community and Leisure Services advised that the centre closed as a result of lock-down requirements and to the best of his knowledge the centre did not reopen after lockdown measures were lifted. The Chair asked for officers to clarify the date of closure.

The Member also sought clarity on why the Leisure Centre did not reopen to the public after its use as a mass vaccination centre by the Aneurin Bevan University Health Board. The Head of Public Protection, Community and Leisure Services gave details of the investment that would be needed to bring the centre back into public use, such as refurbishment of the sports hall floor. The Sports and Leisure Facilities Manager advised Members that only a

small number of calls had been received enquiring about when the Leisure Centre would be reopening. The Member commented that users did not call the centre as they knew it was closed. The Member also suggested that a breakdown of the maintenance backlog estimated at £475,159 would be useful. He also questioned if it was essential to refurbish the sports hall floor.

The Member raised the issue of block bookings and observed that Blackwood Netball had questioned the suitability of alternative facilities at Markham Leisure Centre. The Sports and Leisure Facilities Manager advised that he had discussed with representatives from Blackwood Netball concerns over heating issues and were given reassurances about the provision of facilities in the future.

One Member questioned the assertion in 5.28 that current bookings at Pontllanfraith will be supported to transfer to alternative facilities such as the 3G pitch and sports hall in Islwyn High School which are now available for evening and weekend bookings. The Member observed that this was not happening as clubs were having to email the school and then waiting a few days for a reply. The Sports and Leisure Facilities Manager clarified that weekend bookings were currently being taken by Newbridge Leisure Centre and advised that there had been full weekend use of the 3G pitch by local clubs since Sport and Leisure Services took over weekend booking arrangements for Islwyn High. He also stated that additional communication would be provided to ensure that users knew who to contact to book the alternative indoor facilities on weekends.

One Member sought clarity on the booking process for facilities at Islwyn High School. The Sports and Leisure Facilities Manager provided information on the process and advised that bookings had been for the outside space at the High School and were taken by staff at Newbridge Leisure Centre. The Member asked why the Pontllanfraith centre was closed before the Centre for Vulnerable Learners was operational, given that the facilities at this new location were a replacement for the ones under discussion in the report. The Head of Public Protection, Community and Leisure Services reiterated to Members the financial reasons why it was proposed that the centre is not reopened for public use. The Member raised concerns over the suitability of the new 3G pitch proposed at the CVL. Following further clarification on the financial considerations associated with this matter the Corporate Director for Economy and the Environment reminded Members of the £50M+ savings required by the Council over the coming couple of years and that this report should be considered against that savings requirement backdrop. The Member finished by suggesting that the potential asset transfer of Pontllanfraith Leisure Centre should be fully explored.

The Chair thanked Members and Officers

Following consideration of the report it was

RECOMMENDED to Cabinet that: -

1. The outcome of the consultation exercise be considered.
2. The views of the Housing and Environment Scrutiny Committee on the outcome of the consultation exercise be noted and included in a future report to Cabinet.

9. ALLOCATION CRITERIA FOR ARTIFICIAL SPORTS PITCHES AND THE YSTRAD MYNACH CENTRE FOR SPORTING EXCELLENCE

The Cabinet Member for Waste, Leisure and Green Spaces introduced the report which sought the views of the Housing and Environment Scrutiny Committee on amendments to the criteria that was used in the allocation of bookings for artificial pitches, Second

Generation and Third Generation, E.G Artificial Turf Pitch (ATP)/3 G facilities in Caerphilly County Borough that are managed and delivered by Sport and Leisure Services. The Committee's comments would be included in a further report to Cabinet seeking approval for the amended allocation criteria.

One Member asked about community use of facilities if the emphasis was on higher tier usage. The Sport and Leisure Development Manager gave details on the provision of facilities for sports clubs not in a National Governing Body Pathway System and for those booking a facility for purely leisure purposes. In response to a further point raised around access Members heard how the system had been developed in order to ensure transparency and had included input from the Welsh Rugby Union and Welsh Football Trust. Committee also heard about the challenges around providing facilities as the majority of requests from clubs was for prime slots between 6pm and 8pm on weekdays. The Corporate Director for Economy and the Environment reiterated that the report supported national governing body criteria that informed the allocation of 3G pitches, and that it was fair, robust, and transparent.

A Member highlighted that the location of some facilities was an issue and raised the case of Risca Hockey club who now had to travel across the County Borough. The Member observed that its facility was more than an acceptable 20 minutes travelling time. Committee Members also heard concerns that current users of the Centre for Sporting Excellence might be forced out. The Sport and Leisure Development Manager advised that there should be no issues of displacement and that in terms of hockey the Sue Noake Leisure Centre had been designated a hub for that particular sport. The Sport and Leisure Facilities Manager also provided clarity in relation to the members concerns regarding 20 minute drive time. Confirmation was provided that the 20 min drive time was a leisure industry guide that supported consumer behaviours but was not a standard.

Regarding football criteria one Member enquired if a football club from within the County Borough would have priority over a club from outside the county who were a higher tier side. The Sport and Leisure Development Manager assured Members that facilities for local clubs was the priority and that bookings from teams from outside the County Borough would only be considered for vacant slots where there was no local interest, as the service would rather fill such a slot with an out of county borough team and receive the income than leave it empty.

The Chair thanked Members and Officers

Following consideration of the report it was

RECOMMENDED to Cabinet that the comments of the Housing and Environment Scrutiny Committee on the criteria to be used when allocating the use of the facilities at the Centre for Sporting Excellence and the wider ATP/3G pitch portfolio be noted and included in a report to be presented to Cabinet.

10. FOOD STANDARDS AGENCY AUDIT OF THE CAERPHILLY LAW ENFORCEMENT SERVICES

The Cabinet Member for Planning and Public Protection introduced the report which provided the findings of an audit conducted by the food Standards Agency (FSA), on Caerphilly County Borough Council's food law enforcement services, which included the food safety, food standards and communicable disease control functions within Public Protection.

The audit took place on the 25th and 26th October 2023 and examined Caerphilly County Borough Councils arrangements for the delivery of official food controls. The report

detailed the results of the audit of food hygiene and food standards at Caerphilly County Borough Council to assess food service delivery planning processes and arrangements and reviewed relevant open audit actions from previous audits. The final report was received on 21st November 2023.

The actions taken to address the 21 food hygiene and food standards recommendations, detailed in the authorities' full audit action plan from 2016 were assessed along with the findings from the Food Hygiene Rating Scheme (FHRS) audit of 2017/18.

Members views and recommendations were sought on the FSA audit findings and Action Plan prior to presentation to Cabinet.

The Head of Public Protection, Community and Leisure Services advised the committee that the report covered two disciplines within the Public Protection field and advised that Officers from Environmental Health and Trading Standards were present to answer any questions.

One Member asked about the priority order and enquired which establishment types posed the greatest risk. The Member also wished to know if supermarkets producing party food were inspected. The Environmental Health Manager provided information on the risk rating of premises and Members heard how the criteria was scored on factors such as confidence in management, hygiene, and general approach to managing food safety within the property rather than the type of business. Premises received green stickers with a score displayed ranging from zero to five. Members also heard how all premises were inspected and that each individual component of production was assessed.

A Member wished to know how new food recycling rules for businesses were being incorporated into the action plan. The Environmental Health Manager confirmed that businesses would be expected to increase their food recycling rates and that it was the duty of the proprietor to ensure that there was a contract in place for the suitable collection of such waste. Members also heard about rules coming into force in April that would prohibit food waste entering the sewage system.

The Member also sought confirmation that the Council would be ready by April. The Environmental Health Manager confirmed that regarding waste there was a contract in place for trade premises to put their food waste out for collection and the Council has provision within the County Borough at Bryn Compost in Gelligaer. The food waste is taken to the site where the food waste would be placed in an Anaerobic Digester and recycled, gas is generated to produce movement within the engines that then produces electricity. All premises are being encouraged to utilise the recycling facility that helps with the disposal of food waste and helps to create a greener environment. The Member asked if the Council were taking on new contracts. The Director for Economy and Environment confirmed that a contract database was already in place and advised that if the Council received any new requests for food waste collections, they would have a legal duty to accommodate that request at a cost to the trade premises. It was also pointed out that there was no requirement for any commercial premises to have the waste collected by the Council they could make other arrangements provided it was done legally. Members were reassured that the Council would be ready by the 7th April which is the date the legislation comes into force.

One Member sought assurance that food outlets were complying with rules designed to protect those with food allergies. The Trading Standards, Licensing and Registrars Manager gave details on an allergen training resource for businesses which had been developed by one of her team and shared across the UK. Members also heard how compliance with food allergen requirements are checked as part of the inspection process and that advice and guidance was also offered to businesses. The Committee heard that there was one prosecution in the last 12 months of a business which did not comply with the regulations and that this prosecution had been successful.

The Chair thanked Members and Officers

Following consideration of the report it was moved and seconded that the recommendations be approved. By way of Microsoft Forms and verbal vote (and in noting there were 15 for, 0 against and 0 abstentions) this was unanimously agreed.

RESOLVED that the views and recommendations of the Housing and Environment Scrutiny Committee on the Food Standards Agency Audit findings and Action Plan as detailed in Appendices 1 to 3 be recommended to Cabinet.

The meeting closed at 18:38 p.m.

Approved as a correct record and subject to any amendments or corrections agreed and recorded in the minutes of the meeting held on 26th March 2024, they were signed by the Chair.

CHAIR