



JOINT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF THE MULTI-LOCATIONAL MEETING HELD IN PENALLTA HOUSE AND VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS ON MONDAY 8TH JULY 2024 AT 5.00 P.M.

PRESENT:

Councillor A. Whitcombe – Chair

Councillors:

M. Adams, E.M. Aldworth, A. Angel, C. Bishop, A. Broughton-Pettit, M. Chacon-Dawson, R. Chapman, P. Cook, C.J. Cuss, E. Davies, D. T. Davies (MBE), N. Dix, G. Ead, C. Elsbury, K. Etheridge, M. Evans, A. Farina-Childs, C. Forehead, A. Gair, D. Harse, T. Heron, D. Ingram-Jones, L. Jeremiah, G. Johnston, J. Jones, A. Leonard, A. McConnell, B. Miles, B. Owen, T. Parry, M. Powell, D. Preece, H. Pritchard, J.A. Pritchard, J. Rao, J. Roberts, R. Saralis, J. Simmonds, C. Thomas, L.G. Whittle, S. Williams, W. Williams, J. Winslade, K. Woodland and C. Wright.

Cabinet Members:

Councillors: S. Morgan (Leader of Council), C. Andrews (Education and Communities), S. Cook (Housing), N. George (Corporate Services, Property and Highways), P. Leonard (Planning and Public Protection), C. Morgan (Waste, Leisure and Green Spaces), J. Pritchard (Prosperity, Regeneration and Climate Change) and E. Stenner (Finance and Performance).

Together with:

Officers: D. Street (Deputy Chief Executive), M. S. Williams (Corporate Director Economy and Environment), M. Lloyd (Head of Infrastructure), H. Jones (Waste Strategy and Operations Manager), C. Forbes-Thompson (Scrutiny Manager), H. Lancaster (Transformation Manager), A. Jones (Committee Services Officer) and J. Thomas (Committee Services Officer).

Also in attendance: E. Hallett Waste and Resources Action Programme (WRAP)

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, G. Enright, E. Forehead, J. Fussell, C. Gordon, A. Hussey, M. James, S. Kent, C. Mann, L. Phipps, J. Reed, J. Scriven, S. Skivens and J. Taylor

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest received at the commencement or during the course of the meeting.

3. JOINT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE HELD ON 26TH FEBRUARY 2024.

It was moved and seconded that the minutes of the meeting held on 26th February 2024 be approved as a correct record, By way of Microsoft Forms and verbal confirmation (and in noting there were 39 for, 0 against, and 3 abstentions), this was agreed by the majority present.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Joint Scrutiny Committee held on 26th February 2024 (minute nos. 1 – 5) be approved as a correct record.

REPORTS OF OFFICERS

Consideration was given to the following report.

4. PROPOSED WASTE STRATEGY AND CONSULTATION FEEDBACK

The Cabinet Member for Waste, Leisure and Green Spaces presented the report which provided Members with an update on the key findings from the 12-week Public Consultation on the Councils Draft Waste Strategy.

Members were advised that the Consultation had been a far reaching public Consultation where the views were provided from Caerphilly County Borough Residents on a number of proposals that could help shape our approach to deliver waste and recycling services in the future. Residents were invited to give their views in a variety of ways including a survey, a dedicated edition of Newslines, informal face to face drop-in sessions, pop up opportunities in supermarket foyers and more. The Cabinet Member thanked everyone who completed the survey and had their say on this very important topic.

Through the consultation findings, it offered some initial operational recommendations to help mitigate the public impact of some of the proposals, with additional feedback from the Cross-Party Member Working Group on the initial recommendations.

Members were asked to consider and express views on appropriate next steps in shaping the final draft of the waste strategy using feedback from the public consultation and Member Working Group for Cabinet and Council consideration.

Members were provided with an update on the financial implications associated with the delivery of the Waste Strategy and discussions with Welsh Government on the Outline Business Case (OBC).

The Cabinet Member for Waste, Leisure and Green Spaces thanked the Transformation Manager and the Team who had worked hard on this important Consultation and introduced the Transformation Manager to provide a presentation to the Committee.

The Transformation Manager presented to the Scrutiny Committee a PowerPoint presentation on the Draft Waste and Recycling Strategy Consultation Feedback Summary. The presentation covered all aspects of the 12 week consultation that was undertaken from the 5th February to 29th April 2024, which included the online and hard copy surveys including Newline, Stakeholder engagement, face to face drop-in sessions, online drop-in sessions, pop up engagement, spring events and more. Members were advised that feedback for the 12 week consultation is the quantitative data from the survey and there was also an overview of the main themes arising from the qualitative, conversation-based elements of the public consultation. It was confirmed that there had been 2,816 responses to the survey and that the statistical data presented in the report and presentation related to the survey responses and not the qualitative feedback from conversations. Participation in the consultation was self-selecting and the data should be considered within this context.

Members were provided with the results for the strategic priorities, which showed that residents supported the overall strategy and that residents felt that participation should be as easy as possible, more information or education on what can and what cannot be recycled should be given. A further objective was on waste outside the home, and it was confirmed that this additional objective would be referred to the Cross Party Working Group.

The Committee were advised that there would be no changes to the food waste collection, but it was confirmed that the food waste caddy liner trial had been welcomed with 79% of respondents to the survey only confirmed that they regularly recycled food waste and explanations were provided for those that did not recycle food waste.

The separation of dry recycling proposal when put to the residents they were asked whether they agreed or disagreed that the proposal would help meet statutory targets and they were asked what sort of impact this change would have on their household. Would it be positive one, negative one or a neutral one. The opinions varied and 57% of the residents felt that it would have a negative impact on their household, concerns about the number of recycling containers and the weight of them, and properties where there are several steps were the common issues that were raised.

Changes to garden waste proposals was discussed. It was confirmed that the options were to go fortnightly or to go fortnightly and seasonally, the same questions were put to the residents and the results indicated that 50% did not feel that it would have an impact on them. Almost two thirds said they used the collections weekly and where they did not, they had alternative ways of disposing of garden waste for example using a compost bin or others did not have a garden.

Residents had indicated that if the collections moved to fortnightly or seasonally there were requests to increase the current limit of 4 bags per household and to also extend the seasonal collection period to the end of November and offer a collection

service for real Christmas trees. It was confirmed that there were a number of mitigations that could be put in place to satisfy residents.

Members were provided with the results on the residual waste collections proposals and findings overall showed that 83% preferred 3 weekly proposals over 4 weekly and 17% preferred 4 weekly. 59% disagreed that changes would help meet the statutory recycling targets and 21% agreed and 20% did not know. In relation to what impact to changing 40% said that it would have 8% said it would have a positive impact, 32% said it would have a neutral impact and 60% said it would have a negative impact. Examples of different scenarios was provided to the committee from the responses.

The Committee were advised that through a compositional analysis undertaken by Waste and Resources Action Programme (WRAP) it identified that on average 31% of what goes into our residual waste was food. Feedback from results of survey was mixed and comments were provided to the Committee which included quotes such as it would depend on the size of the household, it would encourage people to look at what they disposed of in the green bin, one size did not fit all and concerns on the weight of bins, the smell particularly from nappies and animal waste, street cleanliness and increase in recycling contamination.

Members were advised that a small number of people responded on the Absorbent Hygiene Products (AHP) expansion proposal, the majority were not aware of the scheme or very few used it. Those that used the service saw the benefits by reducing the waste capacity in their green bin. it was not universally welcomed though. Following conversations with carers groups identified that this would need to be dealt with sensitively.

The review of the Household Recycling Centres results showed that 88% of respondents had used the recycling centres within the last 12 months and feedback showed that people valued the household recycling centres and out of all of the proposals this would have the most negative impact on households. A number of residents would prefer to extend the service not reduce it. Concern was expressed about the carbon impact if people had to travel further if a site were to be closed, the cost of fuel to travel further and whether there would be an increase in fly tipping.

The Committee were advised that the recommendations and comments from the consultation had been taken back to the Cross Party Members Working Group for discussions and then decided on the following recommendations.

Alternative dry recycling receptacles should be considered on a need's basis – to assist those with disabilities/older people.

Pursue fortnightly and seasonal garden waste – but extend the season to the end of November. Also lift the four-bag limit and possibly use brown recycling bin for this purpose.

Expand AHP collection – with a clear criteria, delivered sensitively.

Pursue proposal to reduce the number of HRC's.

Agree to further discuss an additional strategic recommendation of 'waste outside the home.'

The Chair thanked the Transformation Manager and the Team for an excellent consultation and thanked the Members of the Cross-Party Working Group. Members of the Scrutiny Committee were invited to ask Questions.

Concerns were expressed that the containers for separating dry recyclables would be difficult for some residents to manage, particularly for those that lived in terraced properties, and properties with steps are a particular problem and clarification was sought on the types of containers that would be provided. Members were advised that the proposals were to provide a mixture of boxes and bags, a box for glass, a box for paper, and a bag for plastic and cans and another bag for cardboard.

The Scrutiny Committee suggested re-using the existing brown bins which are already paid for. The committee was advised that the new kerbside collection vehicles do not have lifts and are side loading. Crews would have to stretch into the bins to retrieve bags which would increase the time required and would also represent an unacceptable health and safety risk. It might however be possible to use them for garden waste which is planned to be collected with a separate vehicle which could be fitted with a bin lift.

Members asked what consultation had been done with staff on the potential changes to the new collection system, as some of the containers may be heavy to lift. The Committee were advised that a health and safety assessment would be carried out when the new system of collection was agreed, however, the boxes are limited in size to ensure the weight is reasonable and the authority has done and will continue to engage with Trade Unions and the Workforce via the established Working Groups.

The stackable trolley boxes used by other Local Authorities was discussed and it was suggested this might be an option that could be considered for those who need assistance. A Member highlighted the trolley boxes used in a neighbouring Local Authority and stated that these can be problematic with plastics overflowing, boxes falling out when taken down steps and difficulty obtaining replacement trolleys due to costs.

Clarification was sought on the capacity of the proposed new containers compared to the existing brown bins which is much more, and the Committee were assured that additional boxes and bags could be provided where required. However, Members felt that this would only mean additional containers to be transported by Residents and placed on the street for collection.

Members highlighted the issue of brown bins left on the streets throughout the week and this results in a variety of waste being disposed of by passers-by, the option of lockable containers was suggested as a means of preventing this and the Committee were advised that this would need to be checked to see if it was an option.

A Member enquired if we could continue to use brown bins because of the impact on quality of recycling since enforcement on contamination had been introduced, or are we being driven to separate the recyclables as they are collected by Welsh Government in accordance with its Blueprint. The Committee were advised that if co-mingling were to continue there would be no income benefit from selling recycled waste, which would be available if it were separated, and the recycling performance targets were unlikely to be achieved.

A Member asked how we enforced the recycling at present and was assured that since the changes on enforcement were introduced, recycling bins that are contaminated are issued with stickers and this was followed by visits to homes and

could result in fines. In January, there were 890 contaminated bins in one week and this had now reduced significantly with numbers in the 400's.

Members expressed concerns that older persons or those with disabilities would find it difficult to carry several containers and asked if an evaluation of the impact had been carried out. It was also suggested that this may require additional resource to support increased requests for assisted collections. The Committee was advised that the Authority already provided assisted collections with each request being assessed during a visit to the resident (a needs-based assessment). It was not suggested that this would change following the introduction of new models of collection.

A Member questioned why all waste was not collected via rear lanes and were advised that some 20 years ago a Health and Safety report had been produced on rear lane collections in the County Borough and in some cases rear lane collection ceased completely. This was because lanes are very narrow, drivers have limited visibility for pedestrians etc. The HSE allowed it to continue in other lanes but on the proviso that the number of collections did not increase, thereby increasing the risk. The Authority was therefore not able to collect recycling or food/garden waste from rear lanes.

Concerns were expressed regarding the recent changes at Household Recycling Centre's (HRC) requiring separation of recycling, and it was suggested that this has led to increased fly tipping. It was also suggested that people were also using roadside bins to dispose of waste. Therefore, if a HRC was closed there was a perception that this would increase even further and before any closures are considered a full assessment needed to be undertaken which considers the geography of the location of the HRC as well as the socio-economic factors in the local area. The Committee was informed that initial indicators were that the changes at HRC sites had not resulted in increased fly tipping, there were already instances of waste disposal in roadside bins before the changes and indications are that this waste came from businesses. Assurances were provided that no immediate decisions on the HRC site at Rhymney would be made until the A469 road was fully operational.

A Member highlighted that the reason for the lower tonnage at Rhymney and Penmaen, was because they cannot receive the full range of recycling. The Committee were advised that the reason that the range of options for recycling waste at these sites are limited was due to the size of the site. The sites have been optimised as much as possible, there have also been problems at Rhymney with the cardboard container being set alight. The Members queried the separating of carpets and mattresses from residual waste containers and was advised that this had been done while we looked to setup a means to recycle them.

A Member queried paperless billing impact on identification at HRC's and was advised there were other methods such as driving licences as a proof of address.

Members agreed that any proposals for hygiene waste collection would need to be done sensitively and would need to consider Equalities and Human Rights Legislation. The Committee discussed the types of containers to be used for the hygiene waste and were advised that many local authorities used the purple bags that are collected weekly. Members felt that they need somewhere to be stored whilst awaiting pickup, people would not want to keep them in their homes, and bags are vulnerable if left outside, in many cases they would have to be carried through the house for disposal at the front of the property. Members were assured that the many

aspects of the new strategy would require further reports on specifics, the strategy was the overarching principle for the authority to move towards the Blueprint.

A Member asked what the impact on recycling was when we moved to fortnightly and what would be the potential impact of moving to four weekly collections. The Committee were advised that the figure for fortnightly was not available at the meeting but could be checked. However, if we moved to three weekly it was estimated that there would be a 2-3% improvement in recycling and a four weekly collection would result in around a 5% improvement. This would still not take us to 70% target and there was no room for further improvement due to no new infrastructure. Changing frequency of residual waste collections while keeping the existing recycling system would also risk increasing the levels of contamination in the recycling bins.

Also, Welsh Government have not said what will be next in terms of targets, but we know there was a drive towards net 0% carbon emissions target by 2030 and zero waste by 2050. The reduction in the frequency of collection helps with carbon impact of transportation and the biggest impact of the Welsh Government blueprint for source segregated recycling was better quality recycling which could be used again in high value products for example recycled glass being used again in glass manufacture rather than the lower quality use as aggregate.

Concerns were raised on the significant costs outlined in the report and a Member asked if the main factor was the new infrastructure required. The Committee was advised that the acquisition and development of the new site was the main reason for the costs but there were other costs associated with the changes required including vehicles and containers.

Members sought clarification on where the funding would come from to meet the estimated costs. The Committee were advised that Welsh Government had indicated that they would support a percentage of capital costs for infrastructure and vehicles. They were pushing Local Authorities to move towards the blueprint and the significant costs were because Caerphilly does not have the infrastructure capable of delivering the change for example, a sufficiently sized depot to host the large number of vehicles required and a recycling facility for storage, baling and bulking recyclables.

A Member highlighted that it appeared that the Blueprint was something we must do, costs were significant at a time of severe financial pressures with no guarantees that it would work, so we may be spending £45m to save a £2m fine.

Members enquired on what impact the trial of free food waste caddy bags has had and were advised that during the period January to March 2024 there had been an 11% increase in food waste tonnage compared to the same period last year. The early indications for the period April to May was that the increase was 25%. These figures are produced quarterly once they had been verified by NRW. The Committee were pleased to hear of the improvement and would like to see these figures regularly.

Following consideration of the report it was

RECOMMENDED to Cabinet that:

1. The key findings from the 12-week public consultation on the Council's Draft Waste Strategy and subsequent comments from the

Cross-Party Member Working Group be considered. This included some initial operational recommendations – described in detail at 5.9 of the Officers report - to help mitigate the public impact of some of the proposals.

2. The views of the Joint Scrutiny Committee provided be noted on the proposed next steps in shaping the final draft of the waste strategy using feedback from the public consultation, prior to Cabinet and Council consideration.
3. The latest financial implications associated with the delivery of the Waste Strategy be considered and the Joint Scrutiny Committee noted the update on the development of the Outline Business Case (OBC) and discussions with Welsh Government within the financial implications section of the Officer's Report (Section 8).

The meeting closed at 19:01 p.m.

Approved as a correct record, subject to any amendments agreed and recorded in the minutes of the meeting held on the 24th September 2024.

CHAIR