

**COUNTY BOROUGH OF BLAENAU GWENT**

**REPORT TO: THE CHAIR AND MEMBERS OF THE COMMUNITY SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

**SUBJECT: COMMUNITY SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - 21ST SEPTEMBER, 2020**

**REPORT OF: DEMOCRATIC & COMMITTEE SUPPORT OFFICER**

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**PRESENT: COUNCILLOR M. MOORE (CHAIR)**

Councillors C. Meredith (Vice-Chair)  
M. Cook  
S. Healy  
W. Hodgins  
J. Holt  
H. McCarthy  
J. Millard  
G. Paulsen  
K. Pritchard  
B. Summers  
L. Winnett

**WITH:** Corporate Director Regeneration & Community Services  
Head of Community Services  
Service Manager Development & Estates  
Team Manager Waste & Fleet Management  
Team Manager Leisure & Street Scene  
Business Transformation Officer  
Marketing Projects Officer  
Scrutiny & Democratic Officer/Advisor

ITEM	SUBJECT	ACTION
No. 1	<b><u>SIMULTANEOUS TRANSLATION</u></b>  It was noted that no requests had been received for the simultaneous translation service.	

<b>No. 2</b>	<p><b><u>APOLOGIES</u></b></p> <p>Apologies for absence were received for Councillor T. Sharrem.</p>	
<b>No. 3</b>	<p><b><u>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND DISPENSATIONS</u></b></p> <p>Councillor B. Summers declared an interest in the following item:-</p> <p>Item No. 9 – Regional Wood Waste Recycling Facility</p>	
<b>No. 4</b>	<p><b><u>COMMUNITY SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE</u></b></p> <p>The Minutes of the Community Services Scrutiny Committee held on the 4<sup>th</sup> March, 2020 were submitted for points of accuracy.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED that the minutes be accepted as a true record of proceedings.</p>	
<b>No. 5</b>	<p><b><u>COMMUNITY SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE</u></b></p> <p>The Minutes of the special Community Services Scrutiny Committee held on the 1<sup>st</sup> September, 2020 were submitted for points of accuracy.</p> <p>Councillor H. McCarthy reported that his apologies had not been recorded.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED, subject to the foregoing, that the minutes be accepted as a true record of proceedings.</p>	
<b>No. 6</b>	<p><b><u>INVESTMENT IN CHILDREN'S PLAY PROVISION</u></b></p> <p>Consideration was given to report of the Team Manager Street Scene.</p> <p>The Team Manager presented the report which provided an update on children's play area sites and sought Members' endorsement of the current work programme for the installation of play equipment into sites, in line with the priorities identified as part of the detailed play area review undertaken and reported to Council in December 2018.</p>	

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The Officer spoke to the report and highlighted points contained therein. He said the report outlined the rationale for the installation of new children's play equipment purchased following funding received from Welsh Government through the All Wales Play Opportunities Grant. This funding was initially allocated for the creation of a splash park facility at the Festival Park site, however, on the basis that the owners of Festival Park were no longer in a position to take the project forward, a decision was taken under delegated authority to reallocate the funding, as the Council had to advise Welsh Government how the funds would be utilised by the end of March 2020, or the funding would be withdrawn.

Appendix 1 of the report identified play area sites where the purchased equipment would be installed, together with a future rolling programme for any further funding should it become available in the future.

The Officer concluded that Parc Bryn Bach had recently benefitted from new Welsh Government grant funding through the Valleys Regional Parks as part of the Discovery Gateway Project, and a new £185k visitor attraction (play facility) had been installed at the Park and was recently opened to the public following the COVID lockdown period, and had been very well received by visitors to the Park.

A Member expressed concern that the decision was taken under delegated authority. She referred to previous meetings where Members had requested Officers to enter into further discussions with Aneurin Leisure Trust regarding the possibility of the splash park facility at Parc Bryn Bach. However, the Member said she welcomed the investment at Duffryn Park, but would have liked engagement with children in the community on the type of play equipment they would have liked installed at the Park.

The Officer said the funding available for the splash park was £110k, however, costings for the installation etc. was in the region of £250k and ALT felt that the project was not financially viable. In terms of engagement with the community, he agreed that this

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was always the best way to progress, however, on this occasion the deadline to spend the funding by 31<sup>st</sup> March was extremely restricted, but he assured that engagement would be undertaken moving forward.

In response to a question raised by a Member, the Officer confirmed that the £110k had already been received by the Council in 2017/18 for a splash park facility. This was about repurposing the funding in line with the priorities identified under the Council's agreed play area review.

Another Member said he welcomed the investment on many of the Borough's play areas, but unfortunately some would be closed. However, in the future, and hopefully with new housing developments being undertaken in the Borough the provision of play facilities will increase to match the demand that new developments would bring.

In terms of consultation a Member said he hoped that appropriate consultation would be undertaken prior to any closure of facilities being undertaken. He said some of the planned closures would mean that children would have to cross busy main roads, and this needed to be looked at.

The Chair confirmed that discussions with local Ward Members would be undertaken.

The Officer referred Members to the extensive consultation undertaken as part of the play area review that was reported to Council in 2018 and indicated all children's play areas in Blaenau Gwent, and those at risk of closure at that point in time. He said the recommendation was that when the lifespan of those play areas at risk came to an end, further discussions would be held with local Members.

A brief discussion ensued when a Member said she had previously raised safety concerns regarding the potential closure of Glanstruth and Maeshafod play areas, as children would have to

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cross a very busy main road. A Member said he agreed that children's safety was paramount, but pointed out that parents were responsible for the safety of children visiting play areas.

The Committee AGREED to recommend that the report be accepted, and Members endorsed the current work programme for the installation of the already purchased play equipment into the sites identified at 2.14 of the report, and supported further dialogue at Ward level in respect of the future of children's play areas as listed in 2.16 of the report, in line with the "Play Area Review" undertaken in December 2018 (Option 1).

**No. 7**

**WASTE AND RECYCLING PERFORMANCE 2019-20**

Consideration was given to report of the Team Manager Neighbourhood Services.

The Team Manager presented the report which provided an update of waste and recycling performance outcomes for 2019/20.

The Officer went through the report and highlighted points contained therein. He said in 2018/19 the Council exceeded its WG Statutory Recycling Target for the first time. This success was built on, and this year (2019/20) the Council had exceeded the new higher target of 64%, attaining 65.31%. This was achieved through the hard work and dedication of the Waste Team, in partnership with WRAP, and with support from the Communications Team, Performance Team, Senior Management, the Leadership and most importantly the residents of Blaenau Gwent. He said this year on year success has seen Blaenau Gwent move from 22<sup>nd</sup> in 2017/18 to 11<sup>th</sup> in 2019/20 when compared to all other Welsh Local Authorities.

In response to a question raised by a Member regarding the garden waste collection, the Officer confirmed that the figure included the extended winter period collection, which was maintained through the winter with one vehicle. However, the scope to increase garden waste was restricted due to the limited number of green spaces in the Borough and relatively small

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garden sizes.

In relation to the HWRC (Reuse), the Officer said whilst this was a small element of recycling it was intended to maximise this element and extend the service at the new facility at Roseheyworth.

A Member said the improving figures were pleasing, but expressed concern regarding the Council's ranking position, particularly with green waste. He also asked whether any notification had been received from Welsh Government in terms of the potential for increased fines for 2020/21 due to the impact of COVID.

In response the Officer confirmed that no information had been received from Welsh Government in relation to penalties. Whilst the targets were challenging, the recycling figure for 2019/20 was positive, and hopefully with the continued support from residents and hard work of the teams involved the same trend would be seen in 2020/21.

A Member referred to the increased target of 70% over the next 4 years, and asked whether the Council had the capacity to achieve this.

The Team Manager Neighbourhood Services confirmed that Officers were already engaging with WRAP advisors on ways to progress to 70% over the next 4 years. The roll out of the Keeping up with the Jones campaign Borough wide would hopefully have an impact, and there were also other initiatives being considered in order to maximise recycling and achieve that target. The situation would be closely monitored to ensure that everything was being done to achieve the target.

He confirmed that savings achieved through the reduction of residual waste was put back into the service to provide additional resources to continue with the kerbside waste enforcement, new recycling receptacles, and implementation of initiatives to increase recycling.

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A Member commended the Department and the success of the kerbside recycling service and he felt this justified the introduction of the system in 2015

Another Member asked whether green waste included was collected from the Borough's social housing providers, the Officer undertook to investigate.

The Committee AGREED to recommend that the report be accepted and the information contained therein be noted.

**No. 8**

**FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME: 19TH OCTOBER 2020**

The Forward Work Programme for the meeting scheduled for the 19<sup>th</sup> October, 2020 was submitted.

The Chair reported that the Cemetery Capacity report had been moved to the November meeting.

A brief discussion ensued when the Scrutiny Officer confirmed that Straying Animals would be the subject of a future report to Committee.

The Committee AGREED that the report be accepted.

**No. 9**

**EXEMPT ITEM**

**No. 10**

**REGIONAL WOOD WASTE RECYCLING FACILITY**

Councillor B. Summers declared an interest in the following item.

Having regard to the views expressed by the Proper Officer regarding the public interest test, that on balance the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighed the public interest in disclosing the information and that the report should be exempt.

RESOLVED that the public be excluded whilst this item of business is transacted as it is likely there would be a disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 14, Part 1, Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act, 1972 (as amended).

Consideration was given to report of the Team Leader Waste Compliance and Development.

The Team Manager Neighbourhood Services presented the report which provided an update on the development of an Outline Business Case for a Regional Wood Recycling Facility. The Officer went through the report and highlighted points contained therein.

In response to a question raised by a Member, the Officer said it was intended for the facility to be 'green' with a low carbon footprint, and that the majority of the machines would be electric powered.

A Member asked whether there was the potential to generate income from the facility, and would it assist the Council in hitting its recycling target.

The Officer said improved recycling targets was one of the benefits of the facility for participating LA's, it would also provide clarity for panel board manufacturers in terms of consistency around specification and options for income.

A brief discussion ensued when the Officer clarified points raised by Members.

The Committee AGREED to recommend that the report which contained information relating to the business affairs of persons other than the Authority be accepted, and the Outline Business Case to support the development of the Regional Wood Waste Recycling Facility to the next stage be supported (Option 1).