

COUNTY BOROUGH OF BLAENAU GWENT

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

SUBJECT: COMMUNITY SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - 7TH JUNE, 2021

REPORT OF: DEMOCRATIC SUPPORT OFFICER

PRESENT: COUNCILLOR M. MOORE (CHAIR)

Councillors C. Meredith (Vice-Chair)
P. Baldwin
M. Cook
M. Day
P. Edwards
S. Healy
W. Hodgins
J. Holt
J. C. Morgan
L. Parsons
B. Summers
L. Winnett

WITH: Corporate Director Regeneration & Community Services
Head of Community Services
Team Leader Neighbourhood Services
Team Manager Street Scene
Team Manager Environmental Protection
Engineering Manager
Team Leader Highways & Winter Maintenance
Senior Engineer Highways
Marketing & Communication Projects Officer
Scrutiny & Democratic Officer/Advisor

ITEM	SUBJECT	ACTION
No. 1	<p><u>SIMULTANEOUS TRANSLATION</u></p> <p>It was noted that no requests had been received for the simultaneous translation service.</p>	
No. 2	<p><u>APOLOGIES</u></p> <p>Apologies for absence were received for Councillor T. Sharrem.</p>	
No. 3	<p><u>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND DISPENSATIONS</u></p> <p>No declarations of interest or dispensations were reported.</p>	
No. 4	<p><u>TIME OF FUTURE MEETINGS</u></p> <p>It was AGREED that meetings of the Community Services Scrutiny Committee continue to be held at 10.00 a.m.</p>	
No. 5	<p><u>COMMUNITY SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE MINUTES</u></p> <p>The minutes of the Community Services Scrutiny Committee held on 12th April, 2021 were submitted.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED that the minutes be accepted as a true record of proceedings.</p>	
No. 6	<p><u>ACTION SHEET</u></p> <p>There were no actions arising from the Community Services Scrutiny Committee held on the 12th April, 2021.</p>	
No. 7	<p><u>PROPOSED SCRUTINY COMMITTEE FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME 2021-22</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the proposed Scrutiny Committee Forward Work Programme for 2021-22.</p> <p>A Member referred to the increased recycling targets, and expressed concern regarding the impact on capacity within the service. He suggested that a review be undertaken of the</p>	

contingency plans in certain areas of the system, and also a review of the maintenance of potholes in the Borough's highways be undertaken.

Another Member requested an update on fly grazing, and that the update on Civil Parking Enforcement be brought forward from November.

In response the Corporate Director Regeneration & Community Services confirmed that an update on the Council's recycling strategy would be reported to Scrutiny in due course, and this could potentially include contingency plans for the service.

The Team Leader Neighbourhood Services also reported that a piece of work was being undertaken with WRAP and the WLGA looking at progress of the Strategy and whether any adjustments were needed. In terms of capacity within the service, he said there had been a significant increase in the collection of green waste due to the recent good weather, and confirmed that additional crews had been deployed to meet that demand.

A Member requested an update on flood management risk in light of the flooding experienced at Llanhilleth earlier in the year.

In response to a question raised by another Member regarding the Central Depot new build, the Team Leader Street Scene confirmed that a full report on the outline business case would be submitted to Scrutiny on the 19th July, 2021.

Another Member said he was disappointed with the FWP. He referred to a Member's request for an update on flood management risk, and said a more detailed report on the condition of culverts and drains in the Borough was needed. He also referred to the closure of the Civic Centre and felt that the Scrutiny Committee should consider the relocation of the Technical Services Department and associated plans and records. He also agreed that a report on the maintenance of potholes was needed, and also a report on fly tipping.

He concluded that a review of the Council's policy in relation to HMO's was urgently needed.

In response a Member confirmed that discussions were ongoing with the Service Manager Development & Estates regarding guidance for considering planning applications for HMO's.

Another Member sought clarification on the Council's pest control contract, and the Team Leader Environmental Protection confirmed that the current contract would run until the end of March 2022.

The Chair confirmed that the all the issues raised by Members would be discussed with Officers.

The Committee AGREED, subject to the foregoing, that the Forward Work Programme 2021/22 be agreed.

No. 8

HIGHWAY CAPITAL WORKS PROGRAMME 2021 – 2022

Consideration was given to report of the Head of Community Services.

The Senior Engineer Highways presented the report which provided an update on progress of the current Highway Capital Works programme 2017/2021 and presented options around a future 2021/22 works programme.

The Officer went through the report and highlighted the key points contained therein.

A Member sought clarification on the figure of £405k for Bus Infrastructure highlighted in section 2.12 of the report.

The Engineering Manager explained that approximately £250k of the money would be used in response to WG's IRT (Integrated Responsive Transport) programme, and approximately £150k would be used for upgrading the existing bus stop infrastructure, which was a continuation of last year's programme. He urged Members to contact Officers with any issues in relation to bus

stops within their wards.

In response to a further question raised by a Member regarding the Local Transport Fund, the Officer stated that the grants listed in section 2.12 of the report were WG grants with specific funding criteria. He explained that the Active Travel Grant was a different funding initiative to encourage people to walk/cycle to school or work etc.

A Member asked whether there were any monies due from the Education Department as a result of the highway works undertaken as part of the development of the new school at Six Bells.

The Head of Technical Services confirmed that the monies had been fully reimbursed and put into the capital contingency budget. He also confirmed that Council had been fully reimbursed for the works associated with the storm damage.

A Member referred to the list of priority residential roads at section 3.1 (option 1) and said in his opinion there were roads within his ward in a worse state of repair.

The Head of Technical Services said the matrix allowed an independent and objective review of roads using evidence and data, rather than personal judgement. However, he would be happy to have further discussions with Members if they felt there were roads that warranted further consideration, as long as those roads were of similar value and consistent with the ethos of the matrix scoring.

Another Member questioned the classification of some roads, and said whilst he accepted the matrix, he felt it was slightly flawed and should be reviewed moving forward in terms of the delegation of points on various roads within the Borough.

A Member concurred with the Member's comments regarding the classification of roads and said an explanation of the method would be beneficial. He also stated that a number of roads within the Borough had been resurfaced numerous times over the years and expressed concern regarding 'build-up'. The Member then referred to highway safety and suggested that potential funding from Safe Routes to School be explored, and that this be included in the FWP. However, the Member felt that the proposed works

outlined in the report provided value for money.

Another Member asked whether it would be more cost effective to undertake surface overlay of some roads rather than a complete resurface.

In response the Senior Engineer Highways explained that whilst surface overlay provided a large area coverage it did not last as long as a full resurface which provided better value for money, especially in residential areas.

The Member said he was aware of a number of roads that had benefitted from a surface overlay which had lasted many years.

The Officer agreed that some roads benefitted from a surface overlay, however, based on experience a full plain and resurface were more appropriate for residential roads.

Another Member asked whether the Council pursued reimbursement of the costs of repairs to crash barriers/streetlights as a result of car accidents.

The Team Leader Highways & Winter Maintenance said obtaining driver details had proved difficult, however, the Council had now employed the services of a third party company to assist in the process and hopefully the Council would be more successful in pursuing claims moving forward.

A Member enquired as to the Council's adopted method for undertaking pothole repairs. He said works undertaken by statutory undertakers were, in his opinion, of a higher standard than those done by the Council and seemed to last longer.

In response the Officer confirmed that work was currently ongoing with the Team in order to improve this area of work in a cost effective manner. In terms of the method used, she reported that 'cross banding' was not currently being used, but an alternative spray sealant was being costed for trial in due course.

In response to a further question the Senior Engineer Highways confirmed that, subject to approval of the report, the works would hopefully commence mid July.

In relation to works undertaken by statutory undertakers, a

Member asked whether these were inspected by the Council.

The Team Leader Highways & Winter Maintenance confirmed that all works registered by utility companies were inspected by the Council, and a process was in place for any defective works to be corrected. She confirmed that regular meetings were held with statutory undertakers and other LA's in relation to scheduled works, and an embargo was placed on scheduled works on newly resurfaced roads for 2 years, however, this would be lifted for any emergency works that may be required.

A discussion ensued regarding a possible Task and Finish Group when the Head of Technical Services suggested that a Member Briefing be convened to include information on how we maintain our highways, including potholes, and also provide an opportunity to review of the matrix.

Members agreed, however, they said a Task and Finish Group may be necessary pending the outcome of the Briefing session.

The Chair confirmed that arrangements would be made for the Member Briefing to be held prior to the next meeting of the Scrutiny Committee.

The Committee AGREED to recommend that Option 2 be supported, namely:

Highest priority residential roads in each Ward (16 total) and Blaenant Industrial Estate Road – Estimated Total Cost £602,000

Residential Roads: 16 schemes – 1 per Ward

Southend and Walter Street, Georgetown
Mount Pleasant Road, Ebbw Vale North
Institution Terrace, Ebbw Vale South
Maes-y-Cynw Terrace, Llanhilleth
Jubilee Road and Graig Road, Six Bells
Powell Street and High Street (section), Abertillery
Coronation Street, Blaina
South and Hereford Street, Beaufort
Aneurin Crescent, Brynmawr
King Street, Cwm
Railway Terrace, Sirhowy

Stable Lane & Parkville, Tredegar C&W
School Road, Rassau
Waunheulog, Nantyglo
Victoria Street, Cwmtillery
Rhyd Y Blew Roundabout, Badminton
Blaenant Ind Est Resurfacing

**Plus A & B priority roads, and highway safety works –
Estimated Total Cost £912,000**

A & B Priority Roads:

A4048 Heathfield Full Reconstruction Works
A4046 Cwm Bypass Resurfacing

Highway Safety Traffic Management Works: -

Crash Barrier Replacement at A4281 Garnlydan
Crash Barrier Replacement at A467 Abertillery
