

COMMUNITIES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of a meeting of the Communities Scrutiny Committee held in Council Chamber, County Hall, Ruthin and by video conference on Thursday, 24 October 2024 at 10.00 am.

PRESENT

Councillors Michelle Blakeley-Walker, Karen Edwards (Vice-Chair), James Elson, Martyn Hogg, Carol Holliday, Brian Jones, Delyth Jones, Merfyn Parry and Huw Williams (Chair)

ALSO PRESENT

Corporate Director: Governance and Business/Monitoring Officer (GW); Corporate Director: Economy and Environment (TW); Head of Finance & Audit (Section 151 Officer) (LT); Head of Highways & Environmental Service (PJ); Scrutiny Co-ordinator (KE); Committee Administrator/Host (NH); and Committee Administrator/Minutes (RhTJ).

Observers – Councillors Justine Evans, Jason McLellan, Andrea Tomlin, and Will Price.

The Lead Member for Environment and Transport, Councillor Barry Mellor for agenda item 5.

1 APOLOGIES

Apologies were received by Councillor Alan James.

2 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

No declarations were raised.

3 URGENT MATTERS AS AGREED BY THE CHAIR

The Chair allowed Councillor Brian Jones to query the Rhyl Regeneration Programme and Governance report, which had been delayed until March 2025. He raised concern that the projects funded by the levelling-up fund would need to be completed by March 2026. He believed that a year wouldn't be enough time to complete the projects.

Responding Corporate Director: Economy and Environment advised Councillor Jones that the Rhyl Regeneration Programme was more than the Levelling Up Fund Projects. It was a long term programme which did not end in 2025.

The Rhyl Regeneration Programme and Governance Programme had been presented to Scrutiny earlier in the year (2024) and an update would be provided in March 2025.

The Chair requested that Councillor Jones seek any further clarification with the Corporate Director outside the meeting.

4 MINUTES

The minutes of the Communities Scrutiny meeting held on Thursday 5 September 2024 were submitted. There were no matters arising.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Communities Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 5 September 2024 be approved as a true and correct record of the proceedings.

5 ADDITIONAL RESOURCES REQUIRED FOR THE NEW WEEKLY TROLLIBOCS RECYCLING SERVICE AND ASSOCIATED WASTE COLLECTION FUNCTIONS

The Lead Member for Environment and Transport, alongside the Corporate Director of Economy and Environment and the Head of Highways and Environmental Services, presented the report (previously circulated). The report detailed the implementation of the new weekly trollibocs recycling service and associated waste collection functions and the adjustments required to ensure sufficient resources were allocated to ensure the new system could operate on a sustainable footing going forward and enable the Committee to scrutinise the proposal (appended to this report) that was presented to Cabinet on 1 October 2024.

Opening the discussion the Chair questioned whether there had been any additional information since the Cabinet meeting on October 1, in order to prevent repetition of the previous debate.

The Lead Member and officers clarified that further to Cabinet meeting in October the extra funding approved allowed the matter of missed collections to be addressed.

The Corporate Director reminded the Committee that upon introduction of the new service many rounds were failing to be completed and temporary additional resources were needed in terms of overtime, additional agency staff and vehicles.

The majority of residents were now getting the weekly recycling collection service although it was acknowledged that there were still issues with some specific properties not getting a consistent collection service.

The crux of the matter was that there was not enough rounds designed into the service to collect from 46000 properties across the county every week. The under resource of the service at the outset led to the service failure. Moving forward plans had been made to deliver a more sustainable service for the long term with the provision of additional vehicles and drivers.

Since the Cabinet decision Welsh Government had been approached to request additional support towards the capital spend. Welsh Government had indicated that they were willing to provide additional support – although the exact figure was as yet unknown. As a result the cost of purchasing the additional vehicles should be less than previously anticipated and two of those vehicles would be electric rather than diesel.

The service had started to implement the decision made by Cabinet with the procurement of vehicles – six of the eight vehicles had been ordered with anticipation of ordering the electric vehicles imminently. Recruitment for the staff was also underway. The new reorganised recycling rounds would commence on Monday 4th November 2024

Members had been invited to visit the Waste Station earlier in the week to review the revised recycling rounds and check that areas that had previously had problems were included. They were confident that normal service would be resumed.

Whilst the Committee welcomed the update regarding the sourcing of additional vehicles and staff they felt that it would be beneficial to bring a report back in spring 2025 to review how the revised rounds had influenced the service.

Responding to members questions the officers advised:

- Delivery of the diesel vehicles was anticipated in December but the ULEV vehicles were due in the new year, temporary arrangements were being implemented to cover that time frame.
- Recruitment of additional staff was due to begin the following week. There had been a high level of interest from the agency staff who had been covering the rounds so far.
- Any future missed collections should be logged through the C360 system.
- Collection round numbers varies day to day, the maximum number of rounds on any given day would be 28.
- The number of hire vehicles had been reduced once the back log of collections had been addressed, but a few were still being used until the new vehicles arrived.
- The rounds were being revised before receipt of the new vehicles to increase the efficiency of the service.
- Systems were now in place to pull through LPG data to include new build developments into the rounds.
- Consideration would be given to formalising a process around Absorbent Hygiene Product collections and urgent new subscribers, the service were able to be flexible under such circumstances.
- There had been substantial work with the In Cab technology provider regarding assisted collections prior to the roll out of the new rounds.
- All households receiving the assisted collections had been contacted to confirm that the service was still required, informal arrangements were being formalised.

- Problems associated with green bins and potential compensation were being discussed at Corporate Executive Team level and would follow the democratic process for resolution.
- The service would be happy to arrange another visit to the waste centre in the new year to show members how the logging system worked.
- It was expected that the Corporate Director's focus would be weaned off the waste collection service over the next few weeks.
- At least one person who had been assisting the service temporarily had applied for a permanent position.
- There was still one caged vehicle in operation for rural areas, that vehicle had been adapted to keep the various waste streams separate from each other.
- There would be an ongoing communication with residents regarding waste separation and cleansing etc.
- Routes for electric vehicles were planned predominantly around urban areas.
- Whilst the request to Cabinet was for resources up to a maximum of £1.299m dependent on the level of support from Welsh government it would not necessarily require that much.

The Committee requested that the level of support received from Welsh Government was shared with members as soon as it became available and that a review of the new rounds be presented to a member briefing shortly after they were implemented.

It was also proposed that a report be brought back to Communities Scrutiny Committee in February / March 2025 for review.

RESOLVED that:

- 1. an all member briefing be held two weeks after the roll out of the new route to review its progress;***
- 2. a report be brought back to Communities Scrutiny Committee in either February or March 2025 to assess the impact on the additional resources on the effectiveness on the Service and***
- 3. That the Committee confirms that it has taken account of the Wellbeing Impact Assessment (appended to this report) as part of its consideration.***

6 SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME

The Scrutiny Co-ordinator (SC) guided members through the Communities Scrutiny Committee Forward Work Programme.

The SC advised that there had been significant amendments to the forward work programme over the previous few weeks. An email had been sent to Committee members on 1st October to explain which items had been rescheduled and the reasons for it.

There had been an agreement at the Scrutiny Chairs and Vice-chairs Group that priority would be given to projects associated with the Transformation Programme – such as the Waste Service and Public Conveniences Proposal. However all items previously on the forward work programme were still included – albeit at a later date.

The Scrutiny Co-ordinator sought approval from the Committee for those changes to the Communities Scrutiny Committee forward work programme along with the inclusion of the Waste report proposed earlier in the meeting.

RESOLVED that subject to the above the Communities Scrutiny Committee forward work programme be agreed.

7 FEEDBACK FROM COMMITTEE REPRESENTATIVES

Members had no feedback to relay to the committee.

Meeting concluded at 11:25am.