

Minutes



Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee

Date: 27 October 2023

Time: 10.00 am

Present: Councillors P Hourahine (Chair), B Davies, G Horton, P Bright and M Evans

In Attendance: Rhys Cornwall (Strategic Director - Transformation and Corporate Centre), Janice Dent (Policy and Partnership Manager), Silvia Gonzalez-Lopez (Waste Recycling Strategy Manager), Tracy McKim (Head of People, Policy and Transformation), Steve Manning (Senior Scientific Officer) and Kate Wood (Project Manager)

Samantha Schanzer (Scrutiny Adviser), Taylor Strange (Governance Support Officer), Emily Mayger (Governance Support Officer)

Apologies: Councillors S Cocks and L James

1 Declarations of Interest

None.

2 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

- The Committee asked whether there had been any further response from the University of South Wales. The Strategic Director for Transformation and Corporate informed Committee that there was no new information.

The minutes of the previous meeting held **9th October 2023** were **accepted as a true and accurate record**.

3 Air Quality Action Plan

Invitees: Steve Manning (Senior Scientific Officer)
Silvia-Gonzales Lopez (Head of Environment and Public Protection)

The Head of Environment and Public Protection presented the report.

- The Committee questioned why there had been a gap between Plans and why NO₂ was the only particulate measured. The Senior Scientific Officer noted the gap between Plans and assured Committee that updating the Plan had been their focus in the three years since they had joined Newport City Council. They informed Committee that NO₂ was measured as it was what they were most readily able to monitor and NO₂ values could indicate with reasonable certainty the levels of other particulates. They informed Committee that with future legislation and the Environment (Air Quality and Soundscapes) (Wales) Act in 2025, there would be

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greater emphasis placed on other monitoring, but they were waiting on direction and resource from Welsh Government (WG) for this.

- The Committee asked for the parameters shown in table 5.5 to be explained in layperson's terms and the Senior Scientific Officer did this.
- The Committee felt that the report was difficult to read and understand which could be improved upon to ensure that the information is accessible. The Senior Scientific Officer explained that the document was fairly raw and agreed it could be improved but explained that they had to adhere to the template provided by WG and ensure that all information required to be reported is demonstrated. The Head of Environment and Public Protection noted that a secondary, more accessible document could be created to accompany the technical document and consultation process. The Committee welcomed a summary document.
- The Committee asked how data for 2024 had been collected. The Senior Scientific Officer explained that the data had been predicted via modelling.
- The Committee asked whether the 20mph limit would affect pollution. The Senior Scientific Officer highlighted the modelling data but informed Committee that they must also look to real-world examples, and that no significant issue was added as a result.
- The Committee noted that some monitored areas had seen no change or a worsening air quality report. The Senior Scientific Officer highlighted that areas that approached breaching air quality standards would require an in-depth monitoring review but noted that the overall trend showed a decrease.
- The Committee asked whether this report would be presented to Cabinet. The Head of Environment and Public Protection noted that it would be presented to Cabinet post-consultation.
- The Committee felt that the animation provided was helpful but raised concern regarding the consultation survey questions and asked what they wanted from the public from the consultation. The Senior Scientific Officer explained that it was a work in progress. The Head of Environment and Public Protection assured Committee that the consultation was not limited to the document provided and informed Committee that there were direct discussions taking place with AQMA groups and organisations and that the survey was designed to capture third party views.
- The Committee highlighted that there were 17 questions in the survey document and only 5 were directly relevant to the information regarding air quality. The Head of Environment and Public Protection noted that there were a number of questions standard in any survey. The Strategic Director for Transformation and Corporate highlighted that equalities data questions were optional to those answering a survey and was included to ensure communities were not missed from receiving information.

Conclusions:

- The Committee recommended that a summary document be created that is accessible and understandable for laypeople and includes hyperlinks to other relevant documents for those who wish to read further. The Committee recommended that this is published to the website and alongside the consultation document.

4 Budget and Engagement Update

Invitees: Rhys Cornwall (Strategic Director for Transformation and Corporate)
Tracy Mckim (Head of People, Policy and Transformation)
Robert Green (Assistant Head of Finance)

The Strategic Director introduced the report. The Assistant Head of Finance gave a summary of the position, and the Head of People, Policy and Transformation gave a summary of the consultation position.

- The Committee noted that the 2023-24 budget had reflected the population increase over five years and questioned whether assumptions based on the 2021 census would be seen this year. The Assistant Head of Finance informed Committee that WG introduced half of the impact of the increase last year and that they were working on the basis that the full impact would be seen this year. They were waiting to see whether WG make any change to reflect subsequent population changes since the census.
- The Committee asked why fewer responses had been received and felt that an ongoing budget survey on the website might be beneficial. The Head of People, Policy and Transformation was confident that the survey not going out to bus wifi surveys was in part responsible. They explained that they had included this survey with the community safety survey as it was usually popular. They highlighted that there had been a lot of consultations this year and survey fatigue was important to be mindful of. The Head of People, Policy and Transformation understood the point regarding a year-long survey and highlighted the importance of capturing the moment where people want to give their views.
- The Committee felt that in future, going out on the public safety survey might not be helpful. The Strategic Director explained that this was done to make the process more efficient but understood the point.
- The Committee thanked Officers for the quality of questions and clear layout.
- The Committee asked whether responses regarding specific savings and investments from the previous consultation had been used to form questions for this survey and whether questions which asked for alternative savings or solutions were being used. The Strategic Director informed Committee that these responses were used for intelligence which helped focus work when looking at budget savings and investments and that questions asked this year would be regarding the proposed savings for the year 2024-25. The Head of People, Policy and Transformation noted that specific responses focused on more specific topics rather than offering solutions. The Committee felt that it was important to allow residents to give their opinions and take suggestions on board.
- The Committee asked whether there was anything to learn from Blaenau Gwent County Council. The Committee felt that ward meetings regarding this would benefit from Finance Officers being present. The Strategic Director agreed that learning from other authorities was a fair point and informed Committee that in previous years, presentations were taken to ward meetings. They noted that this year's format hadn't yet been looked but agreed it was a valid point to take forward.

The Chair ended the broadcast to receive the confidential Scrutiny Topic Referral.

5 **Scrutiny Adviser Reports**

A) **Action Sheet**

The Scrutiny Advisor noted that the majority of actions had been completed. The Scrutiny Advisor noted one action where a response had been received but they were waiting for clarification on whether more information was required.

B) **Forward Work Programme**

The Scrutiny Advisor presented the Forward Work Programme and noted no changes.

C) **Scrutiny Topic Referral**

The Committee accepted the Scrutiny Topic Referral and agreed to make arrangements.

6 **Live Event**

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