



RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNCIL PUBLIC SERVICE DELIVERY, COMMUNITIES AND PROSPERITY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of the hybrid meeting of the Public Service Delivery, Communities and Prosperity Scrutiny Committee meeting held on Thursday, 17 February 2022 at 5.00 pm.

County Borough Councillors - Public Service Delivery, Communities and Prosperity Scrutiny Committee Members in attendance in the Chamber:-

Councillor S Bradwick (Chair)
Councillor E George

County Borough Councillors - Public Service Delivery, Communities and Prosperity Scrutiny Committee Members in attendance virtually:-

Councillor J Barton	Councillor A Chapman
Councillor A Fox	Councillor D Grehan
Councillor G Holmes	Councillor W Jones
Councillor G Stacey	Councillor W Treeby
Councillor M Weaver	Councillor T Williams

Officers in attendance:-

Mr S Humphreys, Head of Legal Services
Mr D Batten, Head of Leisure
Ms W Edwards, Service Director – Community Services
Ms N Jones, Waste Services Strategic & Ops Officer
Mr S Owen, Service Director – Streetcare
Mr R Wistow - Ecologist
Mr N Kelland – Principal Officer Libraries
Mr G Henson - Countryside Manager
Mr D Brown – Invasive Species Officer
Mrs T Watson - Senior Democratic and Scrutiny Officer

Other County Borough Councillors in attendance:-

Councillor A Crimmings – Cabinet Member for Environment, Leisure & Heritage Services

8 Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from County Borough Councillors J James (MS) and S Pickering.

9 Declaration of Interest

In accordance with the Council's Code of Conduct, the following declarations of

personal interest were made:

Agenda item 5 - Green Waste Collections

- County Borough Councillor J Barton 'I am Chair of Litter-Free Beddau and Tynant and I am a Llantrisant Community Councillor.
- County Borough Councillor S Bradwick 'I am with an Allotment society who have purchased green bags from the Council.

Agenda item 6 – Library Strategy and Action Plan for 2022/25

- County Borough Councillor J Barton 'I am Chair of the Trustees of Beddau and Tynant Community Library'

Agenda item 7 – Current Biodiversity work in RCT

- County Borough Councillor J Barton 'I am one of the people who looks after Tynant Woods'

Agenda item 8 – Update on the control of Japanese Knotweed in Rhondda Cynon Taf.

County Borough Councillor S Bradwick 'My postcode is in the report'

10 Minutes

It was **RESOLVED** to approve the minutes of the 18th November 2021 as an accurate reflection of the meeting subject to noting the apologies of Councillor Weaver, which had been given, for the meeting of the 18th November 2021.

Matters Arising:

Councillor J Barton confirmed that she had received a response from Officers but felt going forward that there needed to be a Council wide Litter Strategy, not just about picking, but about prevention and enforcement.

The Chair sought clarification in relation to the former blue plaque at the Old Cinema, Pontypridd, in respect of a previous request. Democratic Officers to forward the response to Councillor J James.

11 Scrutiny Research

Members were informed of the Scrutiny Research facility that was available to utilise within the Council Business Unit and members could request to use the facility by emailing the Scrutiny mailbox.

12 Consultation Links

Members were informed of the Consultations that may be of interest to them.

13 Green Waste Collections

The Strategic Waste Officer presented the report to Members providing

an update on green waste collections following the implementation of sack collections and the 'RCT's Got a Brand New Bag' communications campaign. She acknowledged that RCT had some very strict recycling targets with a target of 70% set by Welsh Government (WG) and an internal target of 80%, both by 2024. The service was also assisting the Council to become a carbon neutral Council which included reducing the amount of single use plastic and by looking at the Council's carbon footprint. The changes involved switching to reusable green waste sacks, which were free of charge to residents on registering their address against the collections which also allowed the Council to monitor who and how often customers were participating. There was also the opportunity for residents to buy extra sacks.

The Strategic Waste Officer updated Members on the communications campaign. Bringing Members up to date she confirmed there were nearly 36k registered customers with 76.5k sacks, with 97% of these registrations having been online. There was a very small take up of trade with 59, including for example florists, churches, etc. To date, 96% of registered customers had only ordered the 2 free sacks. The Strategic Waste Officer updated Members on both the positive and negative feedback and concerns, following the switchover and as a result, the spring communication had been amended in line with concerns raised. A number of issues that had occurred as a result of the change including some difficult to access properties, properties coming up as trade, allotment collections and missed collections, and the Strategic Waste Officer highlighted the solutions put in place.

The Strategic Waste Officer highlighted that staff were coping well, even though they had not completed a full season, and highlighted the intelligence which could be used going forward to ensure collections were as efficient as possible. She provided Members with some numbers, in terms of resources and highlighted that the Taf area was very top heavy and so a close eye would be kept on resources to ensure that collections did not run behind. In addition, the tonnage and participation would be monitored carefully, and it was hoped that the mass delivery of green sacks had already been done, although again, this would be monitored closely.

The Strategic Waste Officer finished by explaining that communications would be stepped up over the next couple of weeks with a press release going out on the 1st and 15th March which would highlight the return to weekly green waste collections, an increase in social media for the first 2 weeks of Easter in addition to using the information sticker.

The Chair thanked Officers for the report and, following the update, Members were provided with the opportunity to ask questions.

A Member stated that the report was very comprehensive and stated it would be interesting, with regard to demand, to see what happened after Easter, when a lot more people would be gardening. In respect of Allotments, the Member

asked that when Officers communicated with Allotments could they also communicate with Community Councils, so they are kept in the loop.

A Member asked the Officers for clarification in relation to the complaints about the bags containing loose items.

The Strategic Waste Officer confirmed that examples of this were dry leaves and hutch waste, which could be quite light.

The Member also asked for clarifications on properties being removed if no green waste was presented, this being collections and not weeks?

The Strategic Waste Officer confirmed that it was collections.

The Member picked up that some people weren't happy with the number of bags e.g., someone with a small lawn compared with someone with a large area, however the Member felt the report was generally positive.

The Chair noted that rabbit hutch waste was still being collected and asked if this was the same for wood pelleted cat litter?

The Strategic Waste Officer confirmed that it was only hutch animals e.g., Rabbits/Guinea pigs. She explained that they had checked with the processors, and they had been quite clear that it was only hutch waste that they would accept.

The Chair asked for further clarification for the Committee, as a lot of people used the recyclable cat litter pellets?

The Service Director – Streetcare noted that historically the wood pellet type wasn't widely used, but he would seek further clarification.

A Member noted that he had received several complaints where residents hadn't received their sacks and asked if this could be looked into. The Member also noted that one person had complained their sack had accidentally gone into a back of a lorry and was now in dispute with the Council with trying to get a replacement. Regarding Allotments, the Member also asked that communication was needed with Tonyrefail Community Council, who looked after the ones in Tonyrefail. The Member recognised there were hard to reach areas with narrow lanes, and asked if residents would receive green sacks or would they still be using the plastic sacks?

The Service Director - Streetcare noted that they had received a relatively small number of complaints but were aware some were saying they had not received their green bags so the Service would be re-delivering to those people. He explained that when it came to collections, the record would show they had 2 sacks, so if people were trying to use it to get an additional 2 sacks and they presented 4 sacks, only 2 sacks would be collected. It was not open to abuse, in that respect. In terms of narrow lanes, there were some hard-to-reach areas, which the green collection vehicle couldn't access readily, so if those properties were not able to be accessed, they would remain as a plastic sack collection. In terms of the individual green sack in the lorry, if it was the crew's fault, this would be honoured, and the sack replaced. The Strategic Waste Officer explained that she was aware of the case mentioned and would investigate. In terms of Allotments there were some allotments that had to carry on with clear bags,

because of where they were but they would be told that.

The Chair asked if the Council was contacting Council Allotments, or private Allotments?

The Service Director - Streetcare confirmed that initially contact would be with allotments run by societies in order to keep a tight control, but would see how it went.

A Member stated that this was a good report, with few complaints. He explained with regard to loose waste that in the north there were high winds, even in the summer. He understood the issue of tying the bags, but wouldn't that mean crews having to undo a knot? The Member asked if Officers were looking flaps for future bags?

The Service Director - Streetcare explained that a full review would be undertaken after a full season and any future purchases could consider bags with flaps on, if that was a recommendation. In terms of loose waste, he confirmed people were not expected to tie knots, but just put the handles together. In terms of winds, it was a common-sense approach, and he didn't see the green waste posing any greater risk. The Service Director -Streetcare confirmed that all waste collections were suspended for the 18/2 due to the high winds and the knock-on effect for the following week, meant everything moved on a day.

A Member referred to the table on page 12 and noted that the Taf area was taking the lead with green waste collections. He noticed at the top of the league was Beddau, and asked for clarification that this included Beddau and Ty Nant?

The Strategic Waste Officer confirmed that Ty Nant did come under Beddau.

A Member felt that the report should say it covered Beddau and Ty Nant. In respect of extra money for flaps, the Member did not feel if it would be worthwhile, as from a family Members experience, they were not effective.

The Chair noted the saving of about 3m recycling bags, and asked what the saving was on that?

The Service Director - Streetcare confirmed that it was not so much the monetary value, but reduction in single use plastic, but he would find this out.

The Chair noted his disappointment that only 59 businesses had signed up but was glad this was now on the website, and glad the service was looking at allotments. The Chair also felt that the tables for the tonnage, on 4.11, could have been printed better. Regarding the unsuitable vehicles and getting new vehicles in, the Chair asked when this would be looked at and would these vehicles be electric, hydrogen or diesel?

The Service Director - Streetcare stated that vehicles were on a rolling programme over a number of years and was dependent on their current age and condition. The Service was always looking to rationalise and review, what was the appropriate vehicle but there were some areas that could not be accessed with a refuse size vehicle, due to difficulty in accessing those properties, although this was a small percentage. Technology was developing all the time and the Service was well on board under climate change strategy to develop low emission vehicles be it electric or hydrogen going forward. Experiencing of

trailing vehicles had been ok on the flat, but challenging on steep sided valleys, so they needed to be fit for purpose. Technology was constantly changing, and the Service was part of various working groups to look at fleet replacement.

The Chair noted that himself, the Vice chair and other Members of the Committee were happy to be involved in a campaign/video to promote the green waste collections.

The Service Director - Streetcare noted this.

The Chair asked for clarification on the re-bagging of compost and selling it to local allotments.

The Service Director – Streetcare explained that for the processors to make a reasonable quality compost, they needed to extract the plastic fragments. The Service was not responsible for the processing part or the onward potential of reusing and recycling and selling back compost – it was the processors, but he explained that the Service were trying to provide a product that the processors could work with better to be able for it to become a product, that could be considered going forward.

The Cabinet Member Environment, Leisure and Heritage Services thanked the Officers, noting it was not an easy job to bring this in, but it was about climate change and the Council's duty. There was a need to tweak and listen to the residents and she thanked residents for embracing this. There would be a Challenge coming into the spring, but the local authority had been proactive in communication. The Cabinet Member Environment, Leisure and Heritage Services concluded by thanking Scrutiny and Councillors for sharing the information in such a positive way.

The Chair thanked Officers for the report and confirmed they had the backing of the committee.

Members RESOLVED to note the content of the report and agreed that they should further scrutinise, and should be an ongoing item for this committee.

14 Library Strategy and Action Plan for 2022/25

The Service Director – Community Services began by stating this was an opportunity for Members to review the draft strategy and associated Action Plan. This was the third strategy, and it was proposed it covered the next 3 years. It was particularly notable that it had come at the end of the pandemic, which had a major impact on residents and on the library service and section 4 of the report outlined some of the impact covid had on the library service and the adaptations that were made to continue to deliver support to residents during the national and local lockdowns and through the period of restrictions. She noted that Library staff were transferred during the national lockdown to support residents in other ways and whilst all of that was positive, it was a huge challenge for the service itself and it had an impact on what was delivered under the last strategy.

The Service Director – Community Services explained that Appendix 1 showed what was achieved against the key priorities, with a lot being very positive. The positive impact was 110% increase in digital downloads, and a huge increase in those who used that service. Also, a key development, at this time was the

merging of the One4All service with the Library Service which provided opportunities to enhance the provision of advice and information available to residents. In terms of the draft library strategy, at Appendix 2, the Service Director - Community Services explained they had tried to keep it as accessible as possible, to enable people to get a feel for what the service was trying to do. Three key priorities had been identified to inform and shape future provision which would include the ability to deliver more blended approaches. The Service Director - Community Services stated that Members' opinions were valued, and she asked for their opinion in terms of anything they would like to see amended or added. In terms of the Outcomes and Impacts, the Library Service is guided by the universal library outcomes that were identified in the sixth quality framework.

Appendix 3 detailed the action plan which identified how the Service hoped to meet the priorities and achieve the outcomes and impacts. In terms of finance, the Service was core funded but external funding had been drawn down, particularly for new projects which had enabled the Service to enhance the offer to Customers. The Service Director – Community Services concluded by saying there had been significant developments during the period and there had been progress against some key aspects of the previous action plan for 2019 - 2021, but the reduction in footfall because of the pandemic, had been significant and it was recognised it would be a challenge to draw people back in. The other challenge going forward during the transitional period, was meeting the needs of all customers, whether they were looking for more digital services or face to face services.

The Chair thanked the Officer for the report and, following the update, Members were provided with the opportunity to ask questions.

A Member thanked the Officer and noted that she always listened to things from RCT libraries with pride but also sadness explaining that 7 years ago volunteers took over Beddau and Ty Nant library because RCT were going to close it and was very much a community hub which had been hugely successful. The Member asked if Beddau and Ty Nant library could be included in future plans that involved RCT libraries.

The Service Director – Community Services acknowledged that the Service could certainly work and support Beddau and Ty Nant library, noting that when it had been possible e.g. during the Summer Reading Challenge, that those resources had been provided. However, she noted that in terms of the public library service, funding was provided to support 13 libraries and meet the requirements of the customers, but the service would be very happy to work in partnership and provide support to Beddau and Ty Nant library to access other funds that were available and continue to support with initiatives. The Principal Officer - Libraries, commended the volunteers at Beddau and Ty Nant library and reiterated what the Service Director – Community Services had said, in terms of support. He noted that whilst there had been a lot of communication via email, the regular meetings had stopped, and he felt it would be a good idea to start up a quarterly meeting to work together.

A Member commended the service and noted that feedback from residents was that they could not fault the library service in Llantrisant.

A Member acknowledged that with the opening of the Mountain Ash library,

there were doubts by residents over the success it would make, and what would be lost, taking over from the Day centre however she noted what a massive success it had been and how great the staff were.

The Chair referred to Porth Plaza and Llys Cadwyn, which were the newest libraries and asked if the Service Director – Community Services could update Members on what the footfall was for these two new libraries. In terms of the footfall for other libraries the Chair asked for a more detailed breakdown of how the footfall had gone down. The merging of the One4All service with the library service had enhanced the library service and was a way forward and a great initiative.

The Chair asked what facilities were there for those that were deaf?

The Service Director – Community Services explained that a lot of training had been done with library staff on a range of issues where it was felt a better understanding would be helpful. The Wales Council for the Deaf had been successful in gaining funding from the UK Government's Community Renewal Fund, to deliver in RCT, a range of British sign language opportunities for businesses and organisations so that people who were deaf were able to go to places and have somebody there, with some knowledge of British sign language. The Service Director – Community Services confirmed that this would be looked at being put in the delivery plan, and all frontline library staff would have access to some British sign language training, which would provide a bit more accessibility, recognising that it was nice for people to be greeted in their own language, whatever that was.

The Service Director – Community Services confirmed in relation to the previous question on overall numbers of visitors, in the last full year which was 2018 – 2019, there were 727,922 visits to the library. From 1 April 2021 to January 2022 with various alert levels in place, it was down to 284,145, which provided an idea of the impact. The Service Director – Community Services noted the wider impact, with a large number of partners who would normally deliver face to face provision, not able to offer it during that period.

The Chair finished by thanking the Service Director - Community Services for all her hard work all the best for the future, on her impending retirement. The Service Director – Community Services thanked the Chair and Members of the Committee for all their help and kind words.

Members RESOLVED to note the content of the report and agreed that the library report should come back to the Committee on a regular basis.

15 Current Biodiversity work in RCT

The Ecologist explained that the purpose of the report was to give a bit more structure to some of the biodiversity work being done, that was presented to the previous meeting. He hoped that the message from the report was that a lot of the work was cross departmental. The Ecologist acknowledged that RCT was a place of outstanding biodiversity, with the four main priorities being trying to protect what was there, to manage the habitats, raise awareness, and recording what was there. He noted that RCT was a place rich in biodiversity, where people can find rare and interesting species and habitats, even including species new to science.

The Ecologist then took Members through some of the key areas of work, giving a flavour of the direction of work including the planning process, and how ecology is considered in that very important function. This led on to the new Local Development Plan (LDP) which considered Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC) and working on the new LDP, including a new ecological policy. There was a big piece of work around planning which led to ecological mitigation needed for sites, working alongside the legal department on things such as S106 agreements. Another piece of work was the Local Nature Plan, which was a whole community plan trying to pull together what was known about RCT and the biodiversity, to provide evidence based and feedback from the community to build up what was important and why it was important.

The Ecologist continued that the fourth area the report talked about was council land management e.g., local nature reserves, large key countryside sites and living landscape sites and the fifth area was the living landscape project which was being piloted in the next couple of years, with 23 sites over 29 wards and was an attempt to have a network of managed sites, close to communities and have real biodiversity hot spots, linking communities. He noted that real progress had been made on the living landscape project over the last few months and more work would be done over the summer and going forward. This was a big area of work, and it was hoped it would become a demonstration project. The sixth area was the grass management e.g., conservation grazing, cut and collect and wild verges work and was a good example of cross departmental work. The Ecologist noted the 'Let's talk RCT – Wildflowers' website, with an appeal for people to put sites forward for wildflower management. The seventh piece of work, that had taken a lot of focus, was the climate change resilience work and looking at how natural solutions could deliver biodiversity and carbon storage and natural flood management e.g., manage habitats better, restoring peatbogs and having natural tree regeneration, identified as a way of increasing tree cover, as it didn't count currently.

The Ecologist ended his report by noting that the eighth area of work was community engagement, as there was a real thirst from the community to find out more about biodiversity and the concern people had. He noted that they hadn't been able to do walks and talks, over the last few years but the local nature plan had done some good web-based consultation. The final piece of work was that all this fed back into the biodiversity duty, which was a duty imposed on the local authority to show incremental improvements in biodiversity across the whole council. He noted that the Performance Management Service had taken this on. The paper then talked about the challenges and capacity and opportunity that was taken forward. The Ecologist concluded by saying that biodiversity was genuinely cross-departmental and great progress had been made in the last few years and there were great opportunities to be taken forward.

The Chair commended the Ecologist wholeheartedly for his enthusiasm and the report following the update, following which Members were provided with the opportunity to ask questions.

A Member referred to work which was planned for Abercwmboi and parts of the top of Cwmaman and explained previous conversations with an Officer and asked for clarification of what was happening.

The Ecologist explained that the Officer had since left the authority. He knew

about the piece in Abercwmboi, and this would be revisited and taken forward.

A Member thanked Officers for the report and the work they did. The Member was pleased to hear about anything to do with ecology and he hoped a couple of things could be moved forward in Tonyrefail. The Member noted a question from a local group, Tonyrefail Environment Association, with regard to daffodils in verges, which had been cut early and asked if it was possible to make the teams aware about these verges.

The Ecologist explained that he would talk to Streetcare, as this was something that had been raised previously, and noted that daffodils did need that period of being left, after having flowered to be able to flower again.

The Chair noted there were 39 sites for wildflowers and asked if the Officer could provide a breakdown of the sites within each of the wards. He also asked if the Council was looking to buy in more wild plants, to plant in the area?

The Ecologist explained that the schedule that Streetcare were pulling together, for this year, would be mapped to produce maps to show where they are and the idea going forward would be to provide much more specific information e.g., where and what. In respect of wildflower planting, the Ecologist noted that in RCT wildflowers existed, in many cases, and one of things that had been found in RCT, compared to other parts of the UK, was that the biodiversity was still there and when the grass management was started, wildflowers in the local seedbanks would grow. He noted that in different parts of RCT there were different natural wildflowers occurring and so the Ecologist felt that it would be better, not to plant loads of wildflowers in the countryside because it made everything look generically the same, as opposed to maintaining that local distinctiveness.

A Member acknowledged that the report was a pleasure to read. The Member was very supportive of the wildflower initiative and as Mayor would be pleased to provide any help and support, to promote this.

A Member noted a recent site visit about another issue, where a resident took a keen interest in plants and said on a stretch of verge, in the past, there had been rare orchids. He asked, if they were there in a couple of month's time, would that be something that the biodiversity team would be interested in.

The Ecologist explained that in terms of verge management, there was a need to consider those verges where wildflowers could be left safely, but they would look into this to see if the Orchids could be left. The Member agreed to provide the Ecologist with the location.

Members RESOLVED to note the content of the report and support the direction of biodiversity action and delivery identified in the report and the proposal that, in future, regular progress updates are reported to the Committee.

16 Update on the control of Japanese Knotweed in Rhondda Cynon Taf

The Countryside Manager provided Members with a presentation on the control of Japanese Knotweed in Rhondda Cynon Taf. The Countryside Manager noted that all Members would have heard of Japanese

Knotweed or had experience, probably a negative one and provided some background. He noted that Japanese Knotweed affecting properties was mostly quite rare, although he recognised it was a problem. It was important to understand why the plant was so prevalent in the UK and why it did so well, as in its natural environment it didn't pose the problem that was seen here, mainly because it didn't have any natural predators, pests or fungi, so there was nothing to keep it in check. It was very widespread in the UK, including Wales and RCT, in particular. In terms of legislation, this underpinned the responsibility of the Council, and the Countryside Manager took Members through the 3 pieces of relevant legislation that were important, which were the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, Environmental Protection Act 1990 and the Anti-Social Behaviour Crime and Policing Act 2014.

The Countryside Manager then went on to explain about the history of treatment of Japanese Knotweed in RCT, noting that herbicide treatment was the most effective and timing of the treatment the most important thing. The problem was, this wasn't an exact science, and a number of things had a huge bearing on how successful the treatment was, which often meant sites needed to be treated a number of times. The Countryside Manager then talked about how things had changed, in terms of treatment as a result of Bank and Mortgage Company's becoming risk adverse because of the lack of information and scaremongering, related to Japanese Knotweed. As a result, the Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors (RICS) had produced a guidance paper, which talked about the 7m rule, which had resulted in a huge number of complaints about Japanese Knotweed to the Council.

The Countryside Manager then went on to provide Members with information on how the council dealt with Knotweed complaints on Council land, noting that there were currently 408 sites on the annual treatment programme. In terms of future improvements, the Countryside Manager explained the worrying trend, which had been identified, in terms of legal claims and complaints regarding Knotweed and it had been identified that an Invasive Species Officer was needed, with that role recently being appointed to, which would give more time to dedicate and try and mitigate against legal claims. It was hoped with a dedicated Officer, that there would be a move to some proactive work, improvement to the web advice and reporting system whilst providing more training with staff from other departments. The Countryside Manager ended his presentation by providing Members with a list of useful statistics.

The Chair thanked the Officer for the presentation, following which Members were provided with the opportunity to ask questions.

A Member thanked the Officer for the presentation and sought clarification of treatment, by the Council, on private land, and if that couldn't be done, was there something residents could buy to treat it themselves.

The Countryside Manager explained that the Council could not treat private land because of the huge scale of the problem and the priority was trying to mitigate

against legal claims and treatment of Council land. In terms of the advice, the Countryside Manager explained that they did offer advice on how to treat it, best time and best way to approach it, for those that were confident dealing with herbicides. They could also provide advice in terms of looking at an approved contractor to deal with it.

A Member sought clarification on page 91, of the second paragraph of the letter, in relation to land that was managed by the Council, as opposed to owned.

The Countryside Manager explained that it meant the same, effectively although some sites that were owed, but were not actively managed.

The Member also referred to previous media reporting in relation to the introduction of a bug to act as a predator to this species and asked was that something that had happened.

The Countryside Manager noted that this had happened and there was a trial that took place in the Swansea Valley's however he hadn't seen any evidence to suggest that this had been a success story.

The Member asked for clarification on what could be done with an absent landlord.

The Countryside Manager noted that the first point of contact was the Public Health Department and an outline of how the process worked, was included in the Appendix.

The Member noted that that there was a carriageway, where Knotweed was coming from the neighbouring gardening and asked if this was something that could be dealt with.

The Countryside Manager explained that if there was Knotweed on Council land and it was affecting a property, that would be a priority and would be looked to be treated.

A Member asked for clarification in relation to private land where knotweed had emanated from a railway embankment, which was now Council bridleway, and the landowner couldn't be found, and it was now affecting properties.

The Countryside Manager acknowledged it was difficult to comment without specifics and if it was unregistered land, it would be difficult. The Council did treat Knotweed on unregistered land, if it was considered a priority and the budget was available, and it was in the public interest however the Countryside Manager explained there were many examples like this so it would need to be looked at on its individual merits, although it was a difficult balance.

The Member referred to the 442 sites being treated by RCT and noted by his count that there were 78 in Rhondda, 164 in Cynon and 200 in Taf, and sought clarification in regard to this.

The Countryside Manager stated that he could not explain precisely, and perhaps it was either more people having Knotweed in these areas, or more people being affected by the Knotweed? He noted that Taf was a bigger area and there maybe more land holdings that were backing on to properties, so there were a number of factors providing those statistics.

A Member, referring to the Members question in relation to a known landowner, who was not responding and asked if action could be taken under section 215 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 which was land detrimental to the amenities of the neighbourhood.

The Legal Officer noted that section 215 was a potential option and it could be raised with the planning enforcement team

The Member asked if the Council could do the work and then charge the landowner?

The Legal Officer explained that under a 215 notice this was potentially an option.

The Chair noted that the report stated that £10k had been allocated and there was grant funding of £20k, and asked if this was enough.

The Countryside Manager stated, that if he was honest, it wasn't enough. He noted that £24k had been spent on the spraying programme alone, this year.

The Chair noted that in terms of the reserves, £873k had been allocated on 34 sites, because of possible legal action and felt it would be useful for Members to know if there was a Knotweed problem in their ward.

The Countryside Manager explained that this information could be provided.

Members RESOLVED to note the information contained within the report and consider the development of a coordinated approach throughout the Council to Japanese Knotweed including the reporting and treatment as well as staff training. Members asked for update in 12 months time on the way forward.

17 Chair's Review and Close

The Chair noted that he had been Chair of the Committee for the past 5 years, Vice-Chair for 5 years previously, and felt this was the best Committee. The Chair appreciated the work, efforts and contributions from every Member of the Committee and wished all Members the best for the future and hoped to see many back in the chamber in May.

18 Urgent Business

None

This meeting closed at 7.23 pm

**CLLR S. BRADWICK
CHAIR.**