



RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNCIL CLIMATE CHANGE, FRONTLINE SERVICES & PROSPERITY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting of the Climate Change, Frontline Services & Prosperity Scrutiny Committee held on Monday, 16 January 2023 at 5.00 pm at the Hybrid.

This meeting was live streamed, details of which can be accessed [here](#)

County Borough Councillors – The following Climate Change, Frontline Services & Prosperity Scrutiny Committee Councillors were present in the Council Chamber:-

Councillor C Middle (Chair)

Councillor S Emanuel Councillor G Holmes
Councillor W Hughes

The following Climate Change, Frontline Services & Prosperity Scrutiny Committee Councillors were present online:-

Councillor J Barton Councillor V Dunn
Councillor D Grehan Councillor G Jones
Councillor A O Rogers Councillor W Treeby
Councillor R Yeo

Officers in attendance:-

Mr S Gale, Director of Prosperity & Development
Mrs A Virgo, Project Team Leader - Funding and Implementation
Mrs T Watson, Senior Democratic and Scrutiny Officer

County Borough Councillors in attendance:-

Cabinet Member for Development & Prosperity, Councillor M Norris

Apologies for absence

Councillor G L Warren Councillor P Binning
Councillor E L Dunning

33 Welcome

The Chair welcomed Members to the meeting and wished Members a Happy New Year.

34 Apologies

In accordance with the Code of Conduct, apologies of absence were received from County Borough Councillors P Binning, E Dunning and G Warren.

35 Declarations of Interest

There were no declaration of interest pertaining to the agenda.

36 Minutes

The minutes of the 15th November 2022 were approved as an accurate record subject to the following amendments: Councillor Grehan and Councillor Dunn confirmed that they were at the last meeting however they had not been noted on the minutes.

37 Consultations

The Senior Democratic Services Officer referenced the consultation links, which were available through the 'RCT Scrutiny' website. Members were reminded that information is provided in respect of relevant consultations for consideration by the Committee, which are circulated on a monthly basis.

38 Welsh Government 20mph Speed Limit 2023

Members were provided with advice in respect of the Welsh Governments (WG) proposals to reduce the national speed limit from 30mph to 20mph on restricted roads across Wales.

The Head of Traffic and Transportation Officer provided Members with a Power point summary in respect of the WG legislation and it's potential impact on RCT residents.

Following this, Members had the opportunity to ask questions.

A Member raised concerns regarding the implications that this would have on schools if gateway signs vanish. The Head of Traffic and Transport advised that this is a controversial element of the scheme. He advised that letters will be going out to Members advising them that the speed limit signs will remain on the highway until change is implemented and they will remove the red surfacing that's on the highway that is predominately around schools etc. The infrastructure will start to be removed from the highway over the next two to three weeks. The Chair referenced that under the review it mentions about existing signs and lines etc and queried whether an analysis has been done of whether the existing 20mph around schools should be reduced to 10mph. The Officer advised Members that they are not able to introduce 10mph speed limit, the lowest they are allowed to implement is 20mph.

Another Member noted that they welcomed the introduction of the speed limit around built up areas but also noted that they feel this is still not doing enough in respect of reducing accidents on the road. In respect of the Heads of the Valleys roadworks, the Member noted that more needs to be done for the safety of residents and that the Council should pass this on to the WG. The Officer advised Member that the introduction of the 20mph speed limit will help this problem around Hirwaun and the Cynon area but they are also in the process of making a number of bids to WG for a source of funding to provide other road safety measures within Hirwaun over the next two years. The Director of Frontline Services advised Members that in respect of the A465 scheme he and the Chief Executive of the Council will be meeting representatives of Welsh Government and Transport for Wales in the coming weeks and will take the opportunity to discuss this specific matter.

Discussions ensued and the Chair queried whether there would be any 'in costs'

that would hit the Local Authority. The Head of Traffic and Transport confirmed that they are able to bid for the cost of delivering this change. Members were referred to table 1 of the report and advised that there are significant costs associated with this change and the service will be looking to recoup those costs from WG. The Director of Frontline Services added that the Council is looking to commit £2M of Welsh Government grant funding towards this in the first 6 months of the next financial year so that the scheme can be implemented to meet the deadline of 17th September when the 20mph limit will become law. The Director added that the new scheme may affect buses and public transport leading to longer journey times and transport companies having to revise timetables or provide additional services or vehicles to maintain a level of service. This has been raised by the Leader of the Council in his role within the WLGA and he has asked for a Commitment that this be monitored and reviewed beyond the implementation phase so that any unforeseen impacts of the change can be identified and WG funding for mitigation considered.

Another Member raised concerns that there is going to be 22 Local Authorities in Wales looking to get signs made etc and the Member queried how successful RCT has been in securing the contracts. The Head of Traffic and Transportation advised that the service has done its due diligence and has raised early orders with several contractors to try and beat the rush and they are confident that they can deliver by the deadline set by WG.

The Chair referred Members to the recommendations and advised that he would like to see further update reports coming back to Committee in terms of cost implications and how the scheme is being felt in the communities across RCT.

Another Member queried when local Members will be receiving an update of what roads will be effected and raised concerns regarding the private DIY sector and the potential of extended journey times for delivery. The Head of Traffic and Transportation advised that letters will be sent out to local Members this week inviting them to attend a meeting where the roads effected in each local area will be discussed. It was however emphasised to Members that this is a WG scheme and therefore the Local Authority has limited ability to make any changes.

The Chair also queried if this will mean a reduced service for buses. The Head of Traffic and Transportation advised that the WG investigation into this has shown that there will not be much of an impact, however, this will not be known until the scheme has been implemented. The Chair noted the importance of this data coming back to scrutiny at a future date.

Following discussion, Members **RESOLVED** to acknowledge the contents of the report and requested further updated reports as the WG 20mph is rolled out across the County Borough.

39 Highways Investment Scheme

Members of the Committee were provided an update on the highway infrastructure within the County Borough.

Following an overview from the Service Director, Highways and Engineering Members were provided with the opportunity to scrutinise the report.

A Member queried if it would be a waste of money to change the current lights

on signs to LED lights when under the 20mph WG scheme the signs with lights would be replaced anyway to signs without lighting. The Director of Frontline Services advised Members that resources are being co-ordinated to ensure efficient use of funding.

The Chair also noted the potential impact this will have given the austerity measures in the Council's budget over the coming years. The Director of Frontline Services noted that throughout austerity measures the Council has committed its investment in Highways infrastructure and noted that this should continue to be reflected in the 2023/24 budget, subject to the approval of Cabinet and Council. The Chair queried what is the exact budget that has been allocated for bringing back adopted lanes and highways. The Director of Frontline Services confirmed that the funding was committed alongside a Welsh Government pilot scheme and whilst the pilot has been discontinued, the Council has continued to invest in unadopted roads.

The Service Director, Highways and Engineering took the opportunity to praise the RCT Streetcare staff for all their hard work over the past few weeks, particularly in light of the number of storms, snow and heavy rain that we have been receiving. A number of Members also praised the staff for all their hard work. The Chair noted that in the future he would like to see an update report coming to scrutiny in respect of how effective our flood barriers are, the risks, treating culverts, etc.

Following discussion, Members **RESOLVED** to:

1. Acknowledge the contents of the report; and,
2. Agreed to receive future update reports on this matter to allow Members the opportunity to scrutinise future projects.

40 Information Report

The Director of Prosperity and Development introduced the report to Members and provided an update on the UK government Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) which supports the government's wider commitment to level up all parts of the UK and provides funding for local investment between 2022 and 2025. The Director also provide detail of the South East Wales Regional Investment Plan and the Council's lead authority role on behalf of the region and provide detail of the investment opportunities for Rhondda Cynon Taf and detail of the RCT local investment plan.

Following the overview, Members had the opportunity to scrutinise the report and to ask questions.

The Project Team Leader - Funding and Implementation gave Members a Detailed overview of the report from section 4 onwards.

The Chair sought further information on the head per capita compared to Cardiff. The Chair also sought information on the starting point figures of the levelling up and what has RCT lost through Brexit. He also noted that this is levelling up funding from UK Government and that it would be useful to know what impact this has on WG and any schemes that they have funded that might

now be of a detriment to RCT and how RCT might lose out on any potential WG funding. The Chair also queried how this might impact on any other funding available through any grants etc. He also noted the comments in the report regarding numeracy and questioned whether this was in relation to the Prime Minister's suggestion of keeping school children on learning mathematics until they are 18 years old and if so, is this where the potential money will come from.

The Director advised that in terms of previous European funding, RCT are significant beneficiaries of this new Fund and advised that he will collate comparative data and report back to Committee. In terms of numeracy, the service is aware of the Prime Minister's comments, however it is very much an English based programme which will make it difficult to deliver in Wales hence the significant underspend at the beginning of the financial year. The Director reassured Members that this point will continue to be made with WG and will also be emphasised through the WLGA. The Director emphasised that alternatives need to be found and emphasised that they feel the funding can be used across the wider people skills scheme. The Director also agreed on the importance of maximising this funding and that RCT doesn't lose out on other areas of funding. In terms of duplication with the voluntary sector, the Director advised that there are governance arrangements in place across the region so everyone is on the same page going forward.

The Chair noted that he would like to see this as an item on the scrutiny work programme going forward.

Following discussion, Members **RESOLVED** to acknowledge the report and to receive an update report in the future.

41 Urgent Business

There was no urgent business to report.

42 Chairs Review and Close

The Chair thanked Members for attending and reminded Members that the next meeting will be held on the 15th February 2022. The Chair also referred Committee to the recent Bryn pica visit and advised that feedback from members will be taken at the next meeting and the Chair suggested that a subsequent meeting may be necessary to feedback direct to officers.

This meeting closed at 6.29 pm

**Councillor C Middle
Chair.**