



RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNCIL OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY 2022-2027 COMMITTEE
Minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny 2022-2027 Committee held on Monday, 29 July 2024 at 10.30 am at the Taff Street, Pontypridd, CF37 4TH / ZOOM.

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

County Borough Councillors – The following Overview and Scrutiny 2022-2027 Committee Councillors were present in the Council Chamber:-

Councillor J Edwards (Chair)
Councillor B Stephens
Councillor R Davis
Councillor S Emanuel
Councillor C Middle
Councillor G Hughes
Councillor L A Tomkinson
Councillor M Powell
Councillor G L Warren

The following Overview and Scrutiny 2022-2027 Committee Councillors were present online:-

Councillor J Bonetto
Councillor R Williams

Officers in attendance:-

Mr C Hanagan, Service Director of Democratic Services & Communication
Mr A Critchlow, Parking Services and Streetworks Manager
Mr A Wilkins, Director of Legal Services and Democratic Services
Mr S Williams, Director for Highways, Streetcare and Transportation Services
Ms S Daniel, Principal Democratic Services Officer

County Borough Councillors in attendance:-

Councillor A Crimmings
Councillor K Morgan
Councillor K Johnson
Councillor D Evans

Apologies for absence

Councillor Sheryl Evans Councillor Sera Evans
Councillor W Jones

1 Declarations of Interest

In accordance with the Code of Conduct there were no declarations pertaining to the agenda

2 CALL-IN: STANDARDISATION OF THE COUNCIL'S WASTE COLLECTION

ARRANGEMENTS (INCLUDING REVISIONS TO TRADE AND GREEN COLLECTION ARRANGEMENTS)

The Service Director Democratic Services & Communications presented the report which outlined the procedure for the meeting, as set out in rule 17 of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee Procedure Rules. The Service Director advised that a call-in request was received from County Borough Councillors K Morgan, K Johnson and D Evans within the prescribed timescales, on 22 July 2024, which complied with the relevant criteria and considered valid by the proper officer

The call-in requested that the decision of Cabinet in respect of the Standardisation of the Council's Waste Collection arrangements (Including revisions to Trade and Green Collection Arrangements) taken at its meeting held on the 17th July 2024 be considered by the Overview & Scrutiny Committee.

The Service Director outlined the procedures for the meeting with the three signatories, who signed the call-in form, to address Committee first, setting out their reasons for requesting the call-in and why they consider the decision should be referred back to the decision maker for reconsideration. Secondly, the registered public speakers will have the opportunity to address Members before the Director of Highways, Streetcare and Transportation and Cabinet Member address the comments made by the speakers. Members of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee will have the opportunity to consider the valid reasons set out in the report together with all contributions before voting on whether they consider whether the matter should be referred back to Cabinet.

It was confirmed that the nominated signatory, Councillor K Morgan would make the final address before a roll call vote is taken on whether or not to refer the matter back to the relevant decision maker for reconsideration. It will be for the Director of Legal and Democratic Services to clarify and summarise the Committee's decision.

Councillor K Morgan

Councillor Morgan began that no public consultation was undertaken prior to the decision being taken and felt the proposal was not a material change, therefore should be subject to public consultation so the Council can hear the feedback and concerns of their residents, of which there are many being conveyed on social media outlets. Councillor Morgan highlighted concerns of increased flytipping as a result of the change and stated that other Local Authorities are making the change the other way – to Wheelie bins. The Member questioned if the Council will be risk assessing households so they could safely store their bin bags inside the large wheelie bins and then take them out for collections. She was also concerned that the residents will have to reapply for assisted collections causing a delay to the service they will receive. She concluded that earlier correspondence stated that the removal of wheelie bins was not being planned yet a few weeks later, the decision was taken.

K Johnson

Councillor Johnson stated that the potential savings to the Council were not made clear in the report. It does not state what penalties will be imposed on the council if Welsh Government target are not met. He continued that the report

does not state the savings by changing the current fleet nor how reliable the current equipment is. He questioned the efficiency of vehicles travelling to and from the depots. The report also does not state the business rate costs so Members are not aware how competitively priced the service is, or if the service is profitable. To make such a big decision, the full cost implications need to be shared with Members to include the cost of enforcement and the costs associated with assisted collections.

Councillor Johnson also stated that he has many residents concerned over the potential mess left behind caused by vermin ripping open the bags and queried who would be responsible for clearing this up. He concluded that he was also concerned for residents who are disabled and how they would manage with the change in collections.

Cllr David Evans

Councillor Evans stated that an Environmental impact assessment should be made available to Members to see the data. He stated that in his view, the proposed change will see a reduction of cleanliness in our communities. And the change will not see a clear street scene following collections, as other recycling receptacles will be left for residents to take in. Inclement weather will also impact the street scene with rubbish and bags being blown around. He asked what consultation had been undertaken with visually impaired people and what consultation has been carried out with these groups as there was no detail provided in the report. He queried why we are we going back to a system that doesn't work.

The Chair thanked the Councillors for their submissions and invited the public speakers to give their concerns to the Committee. Three Members of the public addressed the Committee.

Following conclusion of the submissions from the public speakers, The Service Director Democratic Services and Communications reminded Committee of the process.

The Director Highways, Streetcare and Transportation advised Members that the proposal was a standardisation rather than material change and Trade waste is a commercial matter. He stated that whilst anticipated savings are in the region of £1m due to the reduction of costs of fleet maintenance, the main reason for the change is to increase recycling rates to ensure the Council continues to achieve strict Welsh Government targets, failure to meet these targets will result in the Council facing heavy fines.

He advised that the proposal will also make the streets safer post collection. The Director commented that there is no evidence to suggest that bags will be ripped open where food waste is recycled in the correct containers provided. He also reassured that the Council take a view of embrace and educate regarding recycling, rather than impose fines on our residents. He also clarified that there is no change to the frequency of the collections and recycling collections will remain weekly.

The Cabinet Member stated that significant information has been gathered in taking this decision. Data shows that the Rhondda has a higher rate of recycling than other parts of the Borough and this change is needed to ensure the Council hits Welsh Government targets or we face financial penalties which could impact other services the Council provides and was therefore satisfied with the

assurances and rational that have been provided.

The Chair asked if there is data available to share publically, What are the benefits of the proposal and how do we compare to other Local Authorities.

The Director Highways, Streetcare and Transportation advised that there are a number of benefits and cost efficiencies. Due to the change of legislation, the Council has to hit targets or we will have financial penalties. He reassured that this will be the best option for the long term.

In response to comments from Members, The Director Highways, Streetcare and Transportation advised there is no evidence to suggest that depot staff have received injuries or sickness as a result of moving waste to the vehicles as waste is usually bagged and then placed into the wheelie bins. He reassured that the Council are in the top quarter according to Keep Wales Tidy regarding litter and cleanliness. He added that the Council try and promote recycling as much as possible through various campaigns. He stated that we actively promote recycling and will continue to do so.

The Head of Streetcare added that the predicted savings, in the region of £1m is as a result of revenue costs of collections, the reduction of the fleet and a more efficient collection rate as everything is standardised across the Borough.

A Member asked if there had been any issues reported with the volume of waste that residents can put out when bagging waste. The Director Highways, Streetcare and Transportation advised that many residents just put 1 bag out every 3 weeks as there isn't a lot that cannot be recycled

A Member commented that with enhanced engagement the Council can make this work. They welcomed the potential cost saving measures and efficiencies. The Member commented that this item could be reviewed at the relevant Scrutiny Committee at an appropriate time.

A Member asked what support will be given to residents who require assisted collections

The Head of Streetcare advised that any resident who has support in place at the moment, will continue to receive this going forward. Residents who do not currently receive support can apply and an assessment will be undertaken by a waste supervisor following a meeting with resident.

In response to a query, the Director Highways, Streetcare and Transportation advised that the Council are looking to move to a greener electric fleet and the option of non-lift vehicles will allow for this opportunity. He added that he appreciates that Members and residents will have concerns where there is a change in the way their waste is collected, however, he reassured that that this has had a long and successful pilot and data proves that recycling in Rhondda is significantly better than in other areas. He stated that the proposed change will improve efficiency of collections and result in savings for the authority.

A member raised concern that there had been no public consultation and therefore members have a duty to scrutinise due to residents' concerns. He asked how we are educating our children and how much waste from RCT is incinerated and will the proposals have an impact on this as this could potentially

have a cost effect as not enough energy is produced. The Cabinet Member Environment and Leisure advised that the energy from the waste incinerated contributes another percentage towards the recycling figures and did not anticipate that this would have a cost implication. She added that a lot of work is undertaken in schools to educate our children to help them understand the process of waste and recycling and so they understand the importance of why we do what we do.

Members commented that most of RCT has lived and operated under the current model which has worked well for many years and as Members, they expect the council to adopt the most efficient way of working. They observed that obligations to the residents are the same as previously and as Members they now need to explain and reassure their residents that this is the best way forward if the authority are to hit recycling targets and avoid heavy financial penalties which could impact the delivery of other critical services.

Following conclusion of Members comments and questions, the Chair invited Councillor Karen Morgan as lead signatory to the Call-In to have a final address to the Committee.

Councillor K Morgan questioned much of the data that had been discussed in relation to the higher recycling rates and stated that more evidence is required before going ahead with the proposals. She added that opposition councillors will continue to represent the views of their residents and that it was clear from representations and objections that the decision should be referred back for the reasons identified and to ensure an Impact Assessment is undertaken. The response demonstrates residents want to be consulted on the matter.

Following Councillor Morgans address the Committee **RESOLVED** not to refer the matter back to Cabinet.

Councillor M Powell wished for his name to be recorded as voting against the matter not being referred back.

The Chair of the Climate Change, Frontline Services and Prosperity Scrutiny Committee recommended that this matter be included with his Committee Work Programme for future monitoring.

3 Urgent Business

None

4 CHAIRS REVIEW AND CLOSE

Mae'r ddogfen hon ar gael yn Gymraeg / This document is also available in Welsh

**Councillor J Edwards
Chair.**