

# COMMUNITY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Thursday, 29 March 2018

**PRESENT:** Councillor S.L. Davies (Chair)

**Councillors:**

D.M. Cundy, C.A. Davies, W.R.A. Davies, H.L. Davies, B.W. Jones, B.A.L. Roberts, A.Vaughan Owen and J.G. Prosser (In place of S. Matthews)

**Also in attendance:**

Councillor L.D. Evans, Executive Board Member for Housing  
A.G. Morgan

**The following Officers were in attendance:**

I. Jones, Head of Leisure  
J. Morgan, Acting Head of Homes & Safer Communities  
S. Walters, Economic Development Manager  
J. Willis, Housing Services Manager (Advice & Options)  
S Jenkins, Physical Regeneration Strategic Programme Manager  
A Bowen, Investing in Homes Lead  
T Peregrine, Economic Development Co-ordinator  
K. Thomas, Democratic Services Officer

**Chamber, - County Hall, Carmarthen. SA31 1JP. - 10.00 - 11.35 am**

**1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors K. Howells, H.I. Jones, S. Matthews, H. Shepardson and G.B. Thomas.

**2. DECLARATIONS OF PERSONAL INTERESTS**

There were no declarations of personal interest.

**3. DECLARATION OF PROHIBITED PARTY WHIPS**

There were no declarations of prohibited party whips.

**4. PUBLIC QUESTIONS (NONE RECEIVED)**

No public questions had been received.

**5. LLANELLI TOWN CENTRE - REGENERATION**

The Committee received a presentation on Regeneration activity within Llanelli Town Centre aligned with the work of the Llanelli Task Force which, over the last two years, had aimed to stimulate growth and investment in the town centre. That included supporting traders, reducing the number of vacant and commercial properties, boosting business, promotion of the Town Centre as a place to live, work, shop and visit, increasing footfall and ensuring it was clean and accessible to all.

The Committee noted the following initiatives/funds had been established/secured to help achieve the aims and regeneration proposals for both Llanelli town centre and countywide:-

- The delivery of the Opportunity Street programme;
- Town Centre Loan scheme;
- Carmarthenshire Business Start Up Grant and Carmarthenshire Business Growth Fund;
- Carmarthenshire Transformational Commercial Property Development Fund;
- Targeted Regeneration Investment Programme.

The following questions/issues were raised on the presentation:-

- Arising from a question on the Carmarthenshire Start Up Grant and Carmarthenshire Business Growth Fund, the Economic Development Manager confirmed the schemes' were not specific to Llanelli and were available countywide. The level of funding available totalled £500k, with any grant award being subject to a number of qualifying criteria.
- In response to a query regarding the fire damaged church building on Murray Street, Llanelli, the Economic Development Manager advised that he could explore the current position relative to that property.
- Reference was made to the accessibility of the Town Centre for cyclists and clarification sought on the current position regarding the production of information maps directing cyclists from the coastal path to the town centre. It was confirmed that whilst a number of access points to the Town Centre had been created, additional work was required on advertising those routes.

The Head of Leisure reminded the Committee that the Authority was preparing a county wide cycling strategy. That included the establishment of a cycling group incorporating Sustrans, Voluntary Groups and its communications division with a view to developing a co-ordinated approach to cycling within the County, and would include the publication of a cycling map.

Arising from the above, reference was made to involving external organisations such as the Heritage Society to link up with tourism to encourage footfall into the Town Centre to promoting attractions such as Llanelli House and Park Howard via the heritage information notice boards within the area.

- Reference was made to the impact commercial business rates could have on redevelopment proposals for the town centre. It was confirmed that following a re-valuation exercise undertaken by the Revaluation Office last April, the level of rates for properties in the town centre had reduced significantly, some by up to two thirds, with Stepney Street and Vaughan Street having seen one of the largest reductions within Wales.
- Reference was made to the work being undertaken in renovating town centre properties and to whether the Council, as landlords, had adopted a requirement for tenants to promote bilingualism in their signage etc. The Economic Development Manager confirmed he would review the current position on the council's requirements for bilingual signage etc to be displayed within any shop premises let as part of Llanelli Town Regeneration and advise the committee members of the outcome.

- In response to a question on the time needed to process applications to the Carmarthenshire Start Up Grant and Carmarthenshire Business Growth Fund, the Economic Development Manager advised it was hoped they could be processed within a month of receipt, subject to applicants providing all the necessary information with the application.
- Reference was made to Phase 3 of the Town Centre Loan and to whether that was available for allocation within Ammanford. The Economic Development Manager confirmed that was the position, however, no applications had been received to date for spend on projects within Ammanford.

Arising from the above, a question was raised on whether the Committee could be provided with an update on the situation within Ammanford. It was also reminded that at the meeting of Council held on the 14<sup>th</sup> February, the Leader of the Council is to provide a presentation to Full Council on the work of the task forces established for both Llanelli and Ammanford Town centres and also on the work of the Carmarthen Town Development group. The Economic Development Manager advised that he could arrange for a presentation on regeneration activity for both Ammanford and Carmarthen to be made to a future meeting of the Committee.

**UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that the presentation be received.**

## **6. 2017/18 WELL-BEING OBJECTIVES PERFORMANCE MONITORING REPORT - QUARTER 3 - 1ST APRIL TO 31ST DECEMBER 2017**

The Committee received for consideration the 2017/18 Well-being Objectives Performance Monitoring Report for Quarter 3 in respect of the period 1<sup>st</sup> April to 31st December, 2017.

The following issues were raised on the report:-

- In response to a question on the lower than anticipated attendance figures at the Council's leisure centres, the Head of Leisure advised that the indicator in question was a national measure incorporating paying and non paying customers and included other facilities managed by the authority such as parks. Whilst the figures had increased by 45,000 in comparison with the corresponding period last year, with a corresponding increase in income, they had fallen short of the target which may be attributable to attendance at outdoor facilities. However, further analysis of the figures would be undertaken to obtain a better understanding of the reasons for the short fall.
- With regard to the proposals to develop a range of options to reward tenants to look after their own home, the Acting Head of Homes and Safer Communities confirmed proposals were being developed with regard thereto for submission to a future meeting. Those could include for example rewarding tenants who maintained their homes in good decorative repair, paid their rent on time or paid by direct debit.
- The Advice and Tenancy Support Manager, responded to a question on the average number of calendar days taken to deliver a Disabled Facilities Grant and advised that some 600 were delivered each year, with the time taken on their provision within the Council's housing stock averaging 50 days. However, the time taken in the private sector could be significantly

longer on the basis the home owner, and not the Council, was responsible for commissioning a builder to undertake the works. He confirmed the council monitored the quality of work undertaken and projects were not signed off unless the required standards were attained.

- The Advice and Tenancy Support Manager responded to a question on homelessness and confirmed the Department undertook periodic assessments of the numbers of people sleeping rough, with the most recent identifying 11 such individuals. Of those, half had been provided with accommodation and discussions were ongoing with the remainder. A new Homelessness Strategy was also being prepared, in consultation with the voluntary sector, to be submitted to a future meeting of the Committee.
- Reference was made to various tourism campaign themes eg. Year of Legend, 2018 year of the Sea and the Pan Wales 2019 year of discovery and to whether the authority was benefitting from those. The Economic Development Manager confirmed that as each theme was announced the authority was able to plan for their introduction and took every opportunity to draw down funding to assist with their promotion to maximise the benefits for Carmarthenshire.

**UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that the report be received.**

## **7. PROVISION OF AFFORDABLE BUNGALOWS IN CARMARTHENSHIRE**

The Committee received a report on the provision of affordable bungalows within Carmarthenshire providing:-

- An overview of the current need, demand and provision of affordable bungalows;
- Details of the demographics of existing tenants and applicants wishing to become council tenants;
- An outline of other available options to support older and disabled tenants to remain independently within their own homes.

The following questions/issues were raised on the report:-

- Reference was made to the lack of availability of one bedroom homes in the rural areas and the availability of two bedroom properties which, in line with council policy, were allocated to those over the age of 55. Clarification was sought on the operation of that policy in relation to persons with a disability under that age limit wishing to remain in the community close to family support.

It was confirmed that whilst the Council operated the over 55 allocation policy it did permit exceptions where medical and physical conditions applied. The Council also operated an accessible housing register whereby adaptations could be undertaken to a persons' property to meet their specific requirements.

- Considerable debate was undertaken on the type of homes provided by the Council and the need to meet the changing needs of tenants e.g. downsizing as children left home, requiring larger accommodation as families grew. As part of that debate reference was made when looking at the need to build properties to involve the Planning Division in respect of the preparation of the revised LDP.

The Interim Head of Housing and Safer Communities in responding to the issues raised advised the Committee that currently, the biggest demand faced by the Council was for the provision of single bed accommodation for single persons. He referred to the committee suggestion that a task and finish group be established to examine the provision of bungalows and advised it would need to be specific on the group's remit and potential outcomes. He therefore suggested there would be merit, in the first instance, in him preparing a scoping document reflecting the committee's views and identifying the level of resources available to facilitate the delivery of any outcomes.

**UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that a scoping document be prepared on the provision of affordable bungalows within Carmarthenshire for submission to a future meeting of the Committee.**

**8. EXPLANATION FOR NON-SUBMISSION OF SCRUTINY REPORT**

The Committee considered the explanations provided for the non-submission of two reports.

**UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that the non-submission report be received.**

**9. MINUTES - 30TH JANUARY, 2018**

Reference was made to the resolution of Minute 5 as being 'unanimous' The Committee was advised that was incorrect and it should have read 'RESOLVED'

**UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on the 30<sup>th</sup> January be assigned as a correct record subject to the resolution of minute 5 being amended to read 'RESOLVED'.**

**10. MINUTES - 16TH FEBRUARY, 2018**

**UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on the 16<sup>th</sup> February, 2018 be signed as a correct record.**

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**CHAIR**

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**DATE**