

COMMUNITY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

(NOTE: THESE MINUTES ARE SUBJECT TO CONFIRMATION BY THE COMMITTEE AT ITS NEXT MEETING)

Monday, 14th September 2015

PRESENT: Councillor D.M. Cundy (Chair)

Councillors:

J.M. Charles, S.L. Davies, W.R.A. Davies, J.K. Howell, J.D. James (In place of T. Devichand), H.I. Jones, S. Matthews, J. Owen, H.B. Shepardson, J. Thomas and E.G. Thomas (Vice-Chair).

The following Officers were in attendance:

C. Moore, Director of Corporate Services
J. Morgan, Director of Community Services
W. Walters, Assistant Chief Executive (ACE) Regeneration & Policy
I. Jones, Head of Leisure & Sport
C. Daniels, Senior Sports and Leisure Manager
D. Eldred, Group Accountant
H.L. Morgan, Interim Economic Development Manager (HLM)
S. Walters, Interim Economic Development Manager (SW)
B. Dolan, Senior Consultant

Chamber, County Hall, Carmarthen – 3:00pm - 4:50 pm.

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors T. Devichand, G. Thomas and Meryl Gravell (Executive Board Member, Regeneration & Leisure).

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. FORTHCOMING ITEMS.

The Committee was provided with a list of forthcoming items to be considered at its next meeting scheduled for the 9th of November 2015.

RESOLVED that the list of forthcoming items be noted.

5. REVENUE AND CAPITAL BUDGET MONITORING 2015/16

The Committee considered the Revenue and Capital Budget Monitoring Reports relating to the end of year position for the 2015/16 financial year regarding Regeneration & Leisure and Housing Services.

The following issues were discussed during consideration of the report:

The latest position regarding Pembrey Ski Slope and Shop was requested. The Head of Sports & Leisure advised that the level of stock had been reduced over the last 2 years and the type restricted to that directly used on the slope. This had helped with profit margins.

An update was asked for in relation to Burry Port Harbour. The Head of Sports & Leisure stated that he had met with the Environment department to develop the tender for the dredging work in the inner harbour recently agreed by the Executive Board (EB). The Committee requested that the EB report is circulated to them.

It was asked why the Authority maintained leisure centres outside of the 3 main towns given the high costs of running them. The Head of Sports & Leisure advised that the other facilities provided a valuable service for local communities in outlying areas such as St. Clears and Newcastle Emlyn.

In response to a question about staffing vacancies in Housing Services adversely affecting staff capacity, the Director stated that he was not aware of any issues but would check with the management team and respond following the meeting.

Further information was requested in relation to the Opportunity Street capital project in Llanelli. The Interim Economic Development Manager advised that Welsh Government funding of £1m over 3 years had been secured. The first phase included the acquisition of 3 properties in the town centre which were to be remodelled to provide smaller commercial premises on the ground floors and affordable dwellings on the upper floors. Work would commence in 2016.

Additional detail was requested regarding the potential £1.1m overspend at the Cross Hands East Strategic Employment Site. The ACE Regeneration & Policy stated that land values had originally been estimated at the start of the Compulsory Purchase Order process based on the land uses allocated within the Unitary Development Plan. This had been subsequently challenged by the owners and the Authority was in negotiation with the owners and District Valuer to agree final terms.

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED TO accept the report

6. ALTERNATIVE MANAGEMENT OPTIONS FOR LEISURE

The Committee considered a report of the outcomes of a review of all potential management options for the leisure and cultural facilities portfolio. The Committee was being asked to consider and comment on the proposed options, mainly to seek to enter into a partnership with an existing or hybrid Not for Profit Distributing Organisation (NPDO) for Sports, Leisure and Theatre services.

Clarification was requested in relation to the £191k savings referred to in the report. The Director of Community Services advised that this would be the savings on rates on transfer of the services however the Authority would be seeking considerably more reductions in cost. It was necessary to test the market to

ensure that cost benefits would be deliverable. There would be the opportunity to scrutinise the detail at a later date.

Further information was asked for regarding the affordability level for a new Llanelli leisure centre. The Director of Corporate Services stated that there was a combination of factors with potentially up to £9m funding from the Llanelli Joint Venture. A Design Build Operate and Maintain model should minimise operating costs and it was hoped that unsupported borrowing would then fund the gap as well as any revenue savings. A new Centre would also provide an opportunity to provide a range of quality indoor facilities which were currently lacking in that area of the county, a destination rather than a traditional leisure centre.

In response to an additional question regarding previous failed outsourced management arrangements for the existing centre, the Head of Sports & Leisure advised that this had been under a very prescriptive and inflexible management contract with a commercial company. They were now looking for a longer term outcome focused contract with the opportunity to plan investments over a longer period. It would also be possible to specify the initial charging structure and link it to the cost of inflation as well as outcomes such as participation levels. Monitoring arrangements would also be put in place. Another advantage of partnering with an existing NPDO was that they would already have bespoke leisure systems, procedures and back office support in place. It would also reduce risks for the Authority as existing NPDOs would have proven track records in running such services.

Services excluded from the proposal were referred to and it was asked why these included public rights of way. The Head of Sports & Leisure noted that the legal aspects of this service had transferred to the Environment Department in April 2015.

The remaining services were referred to and concerns expressed that research into alternative management models should begin sooner rather than later given the need to make significant savings in future years. A careful approach would be needed given the nature of those services and to ensure confidence that high quality, sustainable services would be provided. The Director of Community Services agreed that this was the case. The Authority would have to be clear about what it was asking the market to provide. He advised that some preliminary work had been undertaken in relation to libraries and museums. He agreed to revisit this.

Further information was requested about the option of creating a new NPDO which was not being pursued. The Director of Community Services advised that this would have less of a track record than an existing NPDO and it would take considerably longer to reduce back-office costs as in-house provision was more expensive. It would not be possible to meet the net financial objective in the overall timeline. The Head of Sports & Leisure added that a new NPDO could involve him and his staff bidding against other existing NPDOs as part of the procurement process which would preclude them from being part of the tender assessment process.

RESOLVED to:

6.1 Support the proposal that this Council seeks to enter into a

partnership with an existing or hybrid Not for Profit Distributing Organisation for Sports and Leisure services plus Theatre services as recommended within the report.

- 6.2 Respectfully suggest to the Executive Board that the Director undertakes research at the earliest opportunity into alternative management options for the remaining services within the division.

7. EXPLANATION OF NON SUBMISSION OF SCRUTINY REPORT

The Committee noted the explanations for the non-submission of the New Contractor Framework report and Carmarthenshire's approach to the National Licensing Scheme for Private Landlords.

RESOLVED that the reason for the non-submission be noted.

8. TO SIGN AS A CORRECT RECORD THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 22nd JUNE 2015

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 22nd June 2015, be signed as a correct record.

9. TO SIGN AS A CORRECT RECORD THE MINUTES OF THE JOINT COMMUNITY AND SOCIAL CARE & HEALTH MEETING HELD ON 23RD JULY 2015

RESOLVED that the minutes of the joint Community and Social Care & Health Scrutiny Committees meeting held on 23rd July 2015, be signed as a correct record.