

# COMMUNITY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

2 JULY 2019

**PRESENT:** Councillor F. Akhtar (Chair)

**Councillors:**

H.L. Davies, D.C. Evans, R.E. Evans, S.J.G. Gilasbey, B.W. Jones, S. Matthews, H.B. Shepardson, G.B. Thomas and A Vaughan Owen.

**Also in attendance:**

Councillor S.M. Allen - Substitute for Councillor W.R.A. Davies;  
Councillor L.D. Evans, Executive Board Member for Housing;  
Councillor P. Hughes-Griffiths, Executive Board Member for Culture, Sport and Tourism;  
Councillor L.M. Stephens, Deputy Leader of the Council and Leader of the Independent Group.

**The following Officers were in attendance:**

I. Jones, Head of Leisure;  
J. Morgan, Head of Homes & Safer Communities;  
G. Ayers, Corporate Policy and Partnership Manager;  
H. Morgan, Economic Development Manager;  
S. Walters, Economic Development Manager;  
R.M. Davies, Providing More Homes Lead;  
J. Owen, Democratic Services Officer.

**Chamber, County Hall, Carmarthen: 10:00am - 11:05am**

**1. APPOINTMENT OF CHAIR FOR THE 2019/20 MUNICIPAL YEAR**

**UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED** that Councillor F. Akhtar be appointed Chair of the Committee for 2019/20 municipal year.

**2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies were received from Councillors, C.A. Davies, W.R.A. Davies and H.I. Jones.

**3. DECLARATIONS OF PERSONAL INTERESTS INCLUDING ANY PARTY WHIPS ISSUED IN RELATION TO ANY AGENDA ITEM**

There were no declarations of personal Interest.

There were no declarations of prohibited party whips.

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

No public questions had been received.

## 5. BUILDING MORE COUNCIL HOMES- OUR AMBITION AND PLAN OF ACTION

The Committee considered a report which included a transformational Building more Council Homes – Our Ambition and Plan of Action which aimed to deliver over 900 new Council homes over the next 10 years.

The report detailed information and included proposed recommendations in relation to the following:

- where and when the homes would be built;
- the resources available and the delivery models that would be used;
- how wider regeneration priorities across the county would be supported;
- how new opportunities, as they arise, would be maximised.

The results of the plan of action would deliver the greatest increase in the number of Council homes in the County since the 1970's and return the Council's housing stock levels since the 1990's.

The report outlined that providing more affordable homes was a key strategic priority for the Council and was a five year vision to increase the supply of affordable homes 2015 and, in 2016, when the Council set out its first ambitious 10 year investment programme to deliver over 1000 additional affordable homes across the County. The Council, in its fourth year of delivering the affordable homes had a very successful first three years, as nearly 700 homes were delivered and was currently on course to reach the 1000 homes target.

Members noted that the Council development programme had been developed using a delivery phasing structure which reflected when the homes would be built. Based on a number of factors, including the likely timescales for delivery the programme comprised of three priority phases, which was described in Table 1 of the report.

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

- With regard to the size of the new houses, it was commented that Council houses in the past were robust, well-built with a generous size garden, and in comparison concern was raised that the new houses would be built too close together with smaller gardens. The Head of Homes and Safer Communities announced that the new build homes would be specifically designed to include sufficient space for a lifetime home. Furthermore, in order that the homes were future proof the homes would be compliant with space standards thus ensuring that they would be fit for purpose.
- It was raised that it would be beneficial for Members to receive a breakdown of specific areas of development in terms of variation by ward. The Head of Homes and Safer Communities agreed that he would forward an affordable home activity per ward to Members by e-mail.

- Concerns were raised in relation to the number of planning applications being submitted on a continuous basis in order to retain the permission to build on the land with no work being progressed. The Executive Board member for Housing acknowledged the concerns and reported that discussions were currently ongoing with regard to the possibility of limiting the number of applications for one site. The Head of Homes and Safer Communities offered to e-mail an update on the outcomes of the discussions to the Committee.

**UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED to recommend to the Executive Board that:**

- 5.1 the key delivery principles for the Council new build programme, aligning with our successful Affordable Homes Delivery Plan be re-affirmed;**
- 5.2 the range of delivery models that will be used to build over 900 new Council homes, enabling us to offer a variety of housing options in different areas of the County be agreed;**
- 5.3 that the new Council homes will be delivered using the affordable housing action areas developed as part of the Affordable Homes Delivery Plan;**
- 5.4 the priority phasing structure to be used to determine when the new build sites will be developed;**
- 5.5 the criteria to be used to move developments from Phase B and Phase C into Phase A; and**
- 5.6. the first three year delivery programme for building new Council homes in the county, investing over £53m and creating over 300 new Council homes be agreed.**

**6. DRAFT - CARMARTHENSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL'S ANNUAL REPORT FOR 2018/19**

The Committee considered the Council's Draft Annual Report for 2018/19 produced in accordance with the requirements of both the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2009 and the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015. The report provided an overview of the 2018/19 performance and progress of each of the 15 Well-being Objectives. Members focussed to the following sections within the document as these were relevant to the remit of Community Scrutiny:

- Introduction
- **WBO 2.** Help children live healthy lifestyles
- **WBO 5.** Tackling Poverty
- **WBO 6.** Creating more jobs and growth throughout the county
- **WBO 7.** Increase the availability of rented and affordable homes
- **WBO 8.** Help people live healthy lives (tackling risky behaviour and obesity)
- **WBO 14.** Promoting Welsh language and **Culture**
- Appendices

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

- Reference was made to summary page of the Key Success Measures. It was commented that the use of smiley faces was an inappropriate symbol to denote the success of some measures. The Corporate Policy and Partnership Manager agreed and stated that she would seek a more appropriate symbol to demonstrate the measures of success throughout the document.
- Following several comments raised in relation to the targets, Members were of the opinion that targets needed to be more realistic or be transparent should a trend be identified in relation to a lack of improvement year on year. The Head of Leisure acknowledged that some of the targets were ambitious and that progress of some measures were primarily at grass root level which may take additional time for improvements to be realised.
- With regard to the graph within the Well-being objective 9 which exhibited 'the percentage of people that feel they have a sense of community'. Praise was expressed in relation to Carmarthenshire being the 4th highest year on year % change having reduced from 73% in 2014/15 to 47.4%. The Corporate Policy and Partnership Manager stated that the success was as a result of the Rural Task Force monitoring rural communities, which through partnership working and collaboration worked on ways to improve social inclusion.

It was commented that the recommendations from the Task and Finish review on Loneliness would feed into well-being objective 9. Furthermore, a Member reported that an efficiency fund grant up to £5k was available for application. However, as this was a popular grant, a quick application was advised. The Head of Leisure agreed and acknowledged the importance for Councillors and Officers to utilise any schemes that were available to them.

- In response to a query in relation to the Café and Caravan park in Pembrey Country Park. The Head of Leisure reported that the numerous high profile events had benefited the area and that the Café would make a significant difference to the offer in the park. The new barrier system in the carpark had experienced some teething problems and in the meantime, to assist with any issues that arise, and ensure the smooth running of entry and egress, staff had been located near the barrier, at peak times, with an intercom system in place for all other times to assist with any issues.
- It was raised that Carmarthenshire County Council could benefit from re-introducing fishing permits utilising council assets throughout the County. Furthermore, it was suggested that the Council could take advantage of this opportunity with minimal effort and cost.

In response to a query regarding funding, the Head of Leisure reported that this had not been an area of focus for the department over recent years, however, agreed with the potential and that this is an area that could be explored and developed. The Head of Leisure added that it may be a case of mobilising existing resources and partnerships, as much as funding investment in the first instance. Initial work would need to be undertaken together with key agencies, governing bodies, businesses and local clubs to develop a cohesive plan about co-ordinating such resources.

**UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED:**

- 6.1 to request the Head of Leisure to explore the option of co-ordinating a meeting with key agencies to explore the potential for promoting fishing opportunities across the County;**
- 6.2 TO RECOMMEND TO THE EXECUTIVE BOARD that the Draft Carmarthenshire County Council's Annual Report for 2018/19 be endorsed.**

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

The Committee considered the explanation provided for the non-submission of a scrutiny report.

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

**8. FORTHCOMING ITEMS**

**RESOLVED that the list of forthcoming items for the Committee meeting to be held on the 3<sup>rd</sup> October 2019 be agreed.**

**9. TO SIGN AS A CORRECT RECORD THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON THE 9<sup>TH</sup> MAY, 2019**

**UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that the minutes of the meetings of the Community Scrutiny Committee held on the 9<sup>th</sup> May, 2019 be signed as a correct record.**

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**CHAIR**

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**DATE**