

PLACE, SUSTAINABILITY & CLIMATE CHANGE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

11 MARCH 2024

PRESENT: Councillor K. Madge (Chair)

Councillors (In Person):

K. Davies N. Lewis B.D.J. Phillips G.B. Thomas
Councillor H. Jones - Substitute for Councillor T.A.J. Davies

Councillors (Virtually):

D.C. Evans S. Godfrey-Coles
Councillor D. Donoghue - Substitute for Councillor T. Higgins.

Also in attendance (In Person):

Councillor A. Vaughan Owen, Cabinet Member for Climate Change, Decarbonisation and Sustainability;

Councillor E. Thomas, Cabinet Member for Transport, Waste and Infrastructure Services.

Also Present (In Person):

D.W. John, Head of Environmental Infrastructure;
R. Griffiths, Head of Place and Sustainability;
J. Morgan, Head of Housing;
J. Edwards, Business Improvement Manager;
B. Kathrens, Flood Defence and Coastal Protection Manager;
M. Runeckles, Members Support Officer;
R. D. Williams, Public Health Lead;
J. Owen, Democratic Services Officer.

Also Present (Virtually):

E. Evans, Principal Democratic Services Officer.

[Note: During the final stages of considering Agenda Item 6, the Chair adjourned the meeting at 11:15am due to an unexpected internet outage.

Chamber, County Hall, Carmarthen, SA31 1JP and remotely: 10:00am - 11:15am

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors S. Allen, P. Cooper, J. James, T.A.J. Davies and T. Higgins.

2. DECLARATIONS OF PERSONAL INTEREST INCLUDING ANY PARTY WHIPS ISSUED IN RELATION TO ANY AGENDA ITEM.

There were no declarations of any prohibited party whips.
There were no declarations of interest made.

3. PUBLIC QUESTIONS

The Chair advised that no public questions had been received.

It was raised that, as this item, was a standing agenda item, more promotional work to encourage public questions should take place. The Cabinet Members to work with the Communications team to consider promoting the areas for scrutiny in accordance with the Committee's Forward Work Plan.

4. 2023/24 QUARTER 3 - PERFORMANCE REPORT (01/04/23-31/12/23) RELEVANT TO THIS SCRUTINY

The Committee received a performance report which provided the progress at the end of 2023/24 Quarter 3. Members as part of their role to scrutinise performance considered the progress on the actions relevant to this Committee which were linked to the actions and measures linked to the Corporate Strategy 2022-2027 and Well-being objectives.

Cabinet Members for Climate Change, Decarbonisation and Sustainability and Transport, Waste and Infrastructure Services presented the areas within their portfolio.

The following queries were raised in relation to the report:-

- Reference was made to the complaints section on page 2 of the report. It was commented that as the figures were off target was there something that could be done to improve these? The Head of Environmental Infrastructure stated that a number of complaints were complex in their nature these often took longer to investigate which then would go beyond the 14-day target. Members were assured that the complainant was kept informed at all times of the complaint timeline.
- Reference was made to action 16559 - Implement updated Highway Management System to deliver a risk-based inspection and repair policy. It was asked since the implementation of the system, had the repair programme improved? The Cabinet Member for Transport, Waste and Infrastructure Services explained that the existing highway management system had been updated to implement the risk-based approach for inspection and repair in line with the Highways Asset Management Plan (HAMP) which sets out the prioritisation of the repairs of the road network.

A concern was raised that the target of 90 days to repair a defective road complaint was too long and that a review of this was needed as the rural roads in particular were suffering. An additional comment was raised in support that a lot could happen in 90 days which extended the risk of liability to the Authority escalating potential insurance claims.

- Reference was made to the number of stage 1 complaints cited on page 2 of the report. Disappointment was expressed in regard to the figures cited - out of 253 complaints only 161 were dealt with on time. In addition, in regard to stage 2 complaints – off target, it was commented that the statement provided was not a remedial action - 'it is not possible for senior officers to complete the investigation'. It was felt that this was another way of saying that there were not enough resources to manage the situation. The Business Improvement Manager agreed that the data in relation to stage 1 complaints was not ideal however, in acknowledging that the demand on officer's time was causing an issue it was currently being reviewed. As stated earlier, complaints in the stage 2 phase were more complex taking longer to investigate however, this was negotiated with the complainant.
- In addition to the acknowledgement of the continued deterioration of unclassified roads, focus was drawn to the 3 quarters of the reports that were on-target and praise was conveyed to the team in this achievement.
- In response to a query raised regarding the 20mph signs, the Head of Environmental Infrastructure stated that the Welsh Government currently covered all costs in regard to the defacement and damage to the 20mph signage.
- It was suggested that a cross-party working group be formulated to consider and review the 20mph speed limits within Carmarthenshire. It was felt that many areas could be changed. In response to the suggestion the Cabinet Member for Transport, Waste and Infrastructure Services stated that the Authority was currently waiting on new guidelines to be issued by Welsh Government and following receipt it could be an opportune time for Scrutiny to consider further.

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that the 2023/24 Quarter 3 Performance Report be noted.

5. POTENTIAL DEVELOPMENT OF IN-HOUSE PEST CONTROL AGENCY

The Committee received a report which provided information in regard to the potential development on an In-House Pest Control Agency.

The Cabinet Member for Climate Change, Decarbonisation and Sustainability, in presenting the report asked the Committee to provide their views on whether officers should prepare a detailed business case as part of the pre-decision process for policy development prior to submission to Cabinet.

The following comments/queries/observations were raised in relation to the report:-

- Positive feedback was provided in regard to the idea and content of the report, it was felt that a development of an in-house pest control service would be beneficial and have a positive outcome.

- It was commented that whilst not all private companies consider the wider holistic reasons as to why a rat problem is an issue, this was an area that the Council could achieve.
- It was proposed that the developed business case be provided to the Scrutiny Committee for further consideration. This would allow the Committee to consider the detail including costs and resources. This was duly seconded.
- It was raised that in developing a business case, the service provided by the Authority needed to be a more responsive holding its own against any commercial provision and agreed that the holistic approach is an important factor.

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND TO CABINET that:-

5.1 a detailed business case for the development of an in-house Pest Control Agency as part of the pre-decision process for policy development be undertaken.

5.2 the development of the detailed business case be provided to Scrutiny for consideration.

6. SHORELINE MANAGEMENT & COASTAL ADAPTION IN CARMARTHENSHIRE

The Committee received a report on the Shoreline Management & Coastal Adaption in Carmarthenshire for comment.

The Cabinet Member for Climate Change, Decarbonisation and Sustainability highlighted that whilst Members had previously received the report for scrutiny by e-mail later in October and November of last year, it was placed on the formal agenda for further comment.

The following comments/queries/observations were raised in relation to the report:-

- The Chair reminded Members that a letter had been sent to the Minister for Climate Change on behalf of the Committee seeking additional funding in the quest to help fight against adverse rainfall and storm conditions as a result of climate change.
- In recognising that the Carmarthenshire had a 90km of coastline to manage, a number of comments were made in regard to the difficult decisions that had to be made to spend money on defences. Balancing the need for hard-engineering or managed realignment was a difficult decision with circa 2300 residential homes at risk from coastal erosion.

- In order to show Members the defence work that in place and the issues arising, it was suggested that the Committee consider arranging a site visit to observe areas where work has been undertaken in terms of coastal defence and what was deemed dangerous awaiting work. Officers would consider appropriate sites for the Committee to visit.
- Reference was made to page 4 of the report. In regard to the procurement of the topographical survey of the coast, it was asked if other Authorities had paid for this work to be undertaken or had this Authority purchased on a stand-alone basis? The Flood Defence and Coastal Protection Manager explained that whilst the Welsh Coastal Monitoring Centre (WCMC) commission a baseline survey this Authority had requested some additional work predominantly due to the complexity of the three rivers area to ensure full coverage.
- Reference was made to point 6, page 6 of the report. In respect of Engaging with landowners and developers of industrial and former industrial sites it was asked if more information could be provided in regard to the nature of the engagement with landowners. The Flood Defence and Coastal Protection Manager explained that funding had been received for a new Coastal Adaption Officer. The aim of this role would be community based, liaising with those communities at risk of flooding discussing and sharing what actions they would like to achieve and implement.

**RECONVENED
PLACE, SUSTAINABILITY & CLIMATE CHANGE
SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

22 MARCH 2024

PRESENT: Councillor K. Madge (Chair)

Councillors:

S.M. Allen D.C. Evans J.D. James N. Lewis
M. Donoghue – Substitute for Councillor T. Higgins
H. Jones - Substitute for T.A.J. Davies

Also in attendance:

Councillor A. Vaughan Owen, Cabinet Member for Climate Change, Decarbonisation and Sustainability

Councillor E. Thomas, Cabinet Member for Transport, Waste and Infrastructure Services

Also Present:

R. Griffiths, Head of Place and Sustainability;

B. Kathrens, Flood Defence and Coastal Protection Manager;

S. Rees, Simultaneous Translator;

D. Hall-Jones, Member Support Officer;

M. Runeckles, Members Support Officer;

E. Bryer, Democratic Services Officer;

K. Thomas, Democratic Services Officer.

Virtual Meeting: 10:00am - 10:30am

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors A. Davies, S. Godfrey-Coles, T. Higgins and G.B. Thomas.

2. DECLARATIONS OF PERSONAL INTEREST INCLUDING ANY PARTY WHIPS ISSUED IN RELATION TO ANY AGENDA ITEM.

There were no declarations of any prohibited party whips.

There were no declarations of interest made.

3. SHORELINE MANAGEMENT & COASTAL ADAPTION IN CARMARTHENSHIRE

The Chair reminded the Committee that at its meeting held on the 13th March 2024 consideration of the above item had been adjourned due to technical difficulties, with the meeting having been re-arranged for that day in order for the committee to continue its deliberations on the Shoreline Management Plan and Coastal Adoption in Carmarthenshire together with the other outstanding items on the agenda.

The following comments/queries/observations were raised on the report:

- Reference was made to the 87 actions within the shoreline management plan relating to the Carmarthenshire Coast, Hendy to Pendine. It was confirmed they were regularly scrutinised by the Swansea and Carmarthen Bay Coastal Engineering Group which, in turn reported to Natural Resources Wales and the Welsh Government.
- It was confirmed that any flood defence works to be undertaken on coastline adjoining Carmarthenshire's coast would be subject to a full impact assessment prior to their commencement.
- With regard to the impact of building on flood plains / areas at risk of flooding, the Committee was advised that any such development would be subject to the provisions of the Welsh Governments Technical Advice Note No 15: Development, Flooding and Coastal erosion. That Note was currently being reviewed by the Welsh Government, with publication expected later in the year. Following publication, its provisions would be fed into the local development plan.
- With regard to the potential impact off- shore sand dredging could have on the coastline it was confirmed responsibility for the granting of dredging licences lay with Natural Resources Wales. The Council could however make representations to that body in respect of any dredging which it considered could impact on the County's coastline.

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED:

- 3.1 That the Shoreline Management and Coastal Adoption in Carmarthenshire report be received.**
- 3.2 That the Committee undertake site visits to view coastal defence work undertaken within Carmarthenshire and areas deemed to be dangerous and awaiting works.**

4. FORTHCOMING ITEMS

The Committee considered the list of forthcoming items to be placed on the agenda for the next meeting scheduled to take place on 22nd April, 2024 and was afforded the opportunity to request for any specific information that Members may wish to include within the reports.

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that the list of forthcoming items for the Committee meeting to be held on the 22nd April 2024 be agreed.

5. TO SIGN AS A CORRECT RECORD THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE COMMITTEE HELD ON THE 30TH JANUARY 2024

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on the 30th January, 2024 be signed as a correct record.

CHAIR

DATE