

# COMMUNITY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Monday, 30 January 2017

**PRESENT:** Councillor D.M. Cundy (Chair)

**Councillors:**

T. Devichand, J.K. Howell, S. Matthews, W.R.A. Davies, H.I. Jones, D. Tomos, G.B. Thomas, E.G. Thomas, J. Thomas, J.S. Edmunds (In place of S.L. Davies) and W.T. Evans (In place of J.M. Charles)

**Also in attendance:**

Councillor L.M. Stephens, Executive Board Member for Human Resources, Efficiencies and Collaboration

**The following Officers were in attendance:**

L. Quelch, Head of Planning  
I.R. Llewelyn, Forward Planning Manager  
K. Thomas, Democratic Services Officer

**Chamber, 3 Spilman Street, Carmarthen - 2.00 - 3.40 pm**

**1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors J.M. Charles, S.L. Davies and H.B. Shepardson and from Councillor M. Gravell (Executive Board Member for Regeneration and Leisure).

**2. DECLARATIONS OF PERSONAL INTERESTS**

There were no declarations of personal interests.

**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. FORTHCOMING ITEMS**

The Committee received the list of forthcoming items to be considered at its meeting to be held on the 17<sup>th</sup> February, 2017

**6. ANNUAL PERFORMANCE REPORT 2016 (PLANNING)**

In accordance with Minute 7 of its meeting held on the 3<sup>rd</sup> November, 2016 the Committee received the Planning Division's Annual Performance Report (APR) 2016 in respect of the period April 2015 – March 2016. It was noted that production of an APR was a requirement of the Planning Performance Framework Table and had to be submitted to the Welsh Government by the 31<sup>st</sup> October annually. In accordance with that requirement, the current APR, being the second

to be produced by Carmarthenshire, had been submitted to the Welsh Government by the 31<sup>st</sup> October 2016 deadline.

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

- Reference was made to the provision within the LDP for new housing developments throughout the County, and clarification sought on how the adoption by the Council of a Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL), together with the production of a business case, could be used to fund the provision of appropriate infrastructure e.g. schools, roads and surgeries to support those developments.

The Committee was reminded that as part of the LDP's development, consultations had been undertaken with a wide range of bodies, both public and private on the Plan proposals. Those consultations had been two-way and used as a means of ascertaining those bodies' future development proposals, how they would tie into the plan and to assess any potential infrastructure implications. With regard to the funding of major infrastructure projects, via the possible adoption of a CIL, it was confirmed that whilst the Council was still gathering information in that regard, if adopted, it would require the Council to be more specific on the type of infrastructure required within the County. That would need to be evidence based and include potential costs, and discussions with both external bodies and internal Council departments was critical to that process.

- Reference was made to the planning provision within the LDP for some 280 properties to be built within the Hendy Ward and the current difficulties being experienced in that Ward as a consequence. Those included the local doctor's surgery being at capacity and the recognised highway difficulties encountered both within the village and on the M4 slip road. It was enquired whether the impact of large developments on communities, such as Hendy, could be mitigated by phasing planning approval/implementation over a number of years

The Forward Planning Manager advised that whilst the Council had included a Phasing Policy within the Draft LDP, the Planning Inspector, on examination thereof, had not accepted the policy and instructed its removal on the basis it was considered to have the potential to curtail development. However, as part of the preparation and formulation of the 2<sup>nd</sup> LDP, the situation within Hendy could be cited as a supporting example for a Phasing Policy.

- Further reference was made to the 280 housing allocation for Hendy, coupled with the allocation of over 700 houses in the nearby community of Pontarddulais within the City and County of Swansea. A view was expressed that closer cross boundary dialogue should be undertaken on the impact developments in one local authority area could have on an adjoining neighbouring local authority.

The Head of Planning, in response advised that whilst the Authority liaised with adjoining local authorities on the preparation of their LDP's and tried to influence their plan's policies, wherever possible, that liaison was purely consultory with the ultimate decision resting with the respective local authority. However, current Welsh Government Proposals, if implemented, would require the adoption of a more regional, strategic and cross border

approach to planning on matters such as highways and housing. That could result in Carmarthenshire forming a region with Neath and Port Talbot and the City and County of Swansea.

- Reference was made to earlier concerns on the potential impact the development of approximately 1,000 houses in the Hendy/Pontarddulais areas could have on the local community. Similar concerns were expressed in relation to the Llangennech/LLwynhendy/Bynea and Trostre areas in relation to the 1,000+ houses allocated in those areas. Those concerns centred on the potential impact the developments could have on the areas infrastructure, and how the funding of improvements thereto could be met via Section 106 Agreements or, potentially, a CIL. It was also noted that, in total, the LDP allocation for new housing throughout Carmarthenshire over the plan period totalled 15,921 which, potentially, could result in countywide infrastructure implications.

The Forward Planning Manager recognised the plan provision was significant and assured that the planning department was aware of emerging trends that would feed into future LDP Annual Monitoring Reports for assessment on whether the Plan's aspirations were being met. With regard to the funding for infrastructure projects he referred to previous discussion on the limitations of Section 106 funding, being development specific, and the work being undertaken on the adoption of a CIL to provide funding for countywide infrastructure projects.

- Reference was made to the replacement of the Integrated Community Strategy 2011-16 in 2017 by the Wellbeing and Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015, which would come into force in 2018. Concern was expressed at the above time scales and the possibility some of the Strategy's provisions could 'slip through the net' during the change-over period.

The Forward Planning Manager advised that although there would be a gap between the expiration of the ICS and implementation of the new Well Being Plans, it was important the relationship with the LDP was maintained and discussions with the Public Service Board were ongoing to ensure the continued alignment of those two core plans.

- References were made to the limitations current planning policies placed on the granting of new homes for farmers/ extensions to existing farmhouses to enable young farmers to reside on the farm holding, and to whether there were any avenues available to the Council to assist those farmers to remain on the holding.

The Head of Planning advised that whilst current council policies allowed for succession planning, and farmers should enter into dialogue with planning officers in that regard, the Council was guided by National Planning Policies issued by the Welsh Government. Changing/influencing those policies would require providing the government with reasoned evidenced based arguments. Whilst that evidence could be gathered by officers, in consultation with other authorities to assess if they were encountering similar difficulties, it would also be prudent for similar representations to be made at elected member/ministerial level, if any changes were to be effected. She stated however that whilst having regard to National Planning Policies, there may be the potential to introduce amended local policies as part of the revised LDP but, any such policy

revision would, again, need to be justified by a reasoned evidenced based argument.

In response to a suggestion, the Executive Board Member with responsibility for the planning portfolio confirmed she would write to the Welsh Local Government Association highlighting the above issue and requesting it make representations to the Welsh Government.

- In response to a question on the possibility of allocating additional plots within rural communities to assist local young people to remain within the community, the Head of Planning advised that, as with the previous discussion, the Department's ability was constrained by national policies but, there may be an opportunity, as part of the preparations for the production of the revised LDP to examine that issue. However, any suggested/proposed changes to existing policies would need to be substantiated by an evidence based argument. In that regard, the Housing Division was currently undertaking an assessment on rural need which may be able to assist in providing that evidence.
- In response to a question on the time taken for the conversion of office to residential accommodation in town centres, which it was alleged could take 18-24 months, the Head of Planning advised there could be a number of factors involved in the determination of such applications e.g. lack of amenities/lack of car parking etc. The Council was, however, endeavouring to speed up the process via the introduction of Local Development Orders and a Pilot Order for Llanelli Town Centre was currently progressing through the Council's political process. If successful, the pilot could be rolled out to other areas within the County.

## **RESOLVED**

**6.1 that the report be received.**

**6.2 that the next Annual Performance Report be submitted to the Committee for consideration prior to its submission to the Welsh Government**

## **7. ANNUAL MONITORING REPORT 2015/16 - CARMARTHENSHIRE LOCAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN**

In accordance with Minute 8 of its meeting held on the 3<sup>rd</sup> November, 2016 the Committee received for further consideration the Annual Monitoring Report 2015/16 on the Carmarthenshire Local Development Plan.

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

- Reference was made to the allocation with the LDP for the provision of 15,197 housing units, and a view expressed that different ways of providing that housing needed to be explored rather than continually building new properties on land, which was a finite resource.

The Forward Planning Manager advised that the 15,197 units did not solely represent new build and could be provided via a number of avenues e.g. conversion of large residential properties into smaller units, conversion of office/industrial building or bringing empty residential properties back into habitable use, a practice in which the Council's Housing Division had been very successful.

- The Forward Planning Manager, in response to a question relating to variations throughout the county on the level of affordable housing provision within housing developments advised that the level was dependent on the profitability of an individual development. He confirmed the level of provision required continual review and should reflect market values.

**RESOLVED that the report be received.**

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**CHAIR**

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**DATE**