

COMMUNITY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MONDAY, 5 DECEMBER 2016

PRESENT: Councillor D.M. Cundy (Chair)

Councillors:

J.M. Charles, W.R.A. Davies, S.L. Davies, T. Devichand, J.K. Howell, E.G. Thomas, G.B. Thomas, J. Thomas and D. Tomos.

Also in attendance:

Councillor L.D. Evans, Executive Board Member for Housing,
Councillor P.A. Palmer, Executive Board Member for Communities (Deputy Leader),
Councillor L.M. Stephens, Executive Board Member for Human Resources, Efficiencies and Collaboration.

The following Officers were in attendance:

O. Bowen, Head of Financial Services,
J. Edwards, Development Management Manager,
J. Fearn, Head of Property,
I. Jones, Head of Leisure,
H. Morgan, Economic Development Manager,
S. Pilliner, Head of Transportation & Highways,
R. Staines, Head of Housing and Public Protection,
W. Walters, Assistant Chief Executive (Regeneration & Policy).
J. Owen, Democratic Services Officer

Chamber, County Hall, Carmarthen - 2.00pm - 4.10pm

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors H.I. Jones, S. Matthews and 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 a list of forthcoming items to be considered at its meeting to be held on the 20th January 2017.

The high number of agenda items presented to the Committee was noted. In order for Members to continue to provide an effective scrutiny function it was commented that the number of agenda items should be limited in future.

It was proposed that an additional meeting be arranged in early 2017 in order to manage the high volume of agenda items.

RESOLVED that an additional Community Scrutiny Committee be arranged early 2017.

6. REVENUE BUDGET STRATEGY CONSULTATION 2017/18 to 2019/20

The Committee considered the Revenue Budget Strategy 2017/18 to 2019/20 (Appendix A) which had been endorsed by the Executive Board for consultation purposes at its meeting on 21st November 2016. The report provided Members with the current view of the Revenue Budget for 2017/2018 together with indicative figures for the 2017/2018 and 2019/2020 financial years. The report was based on officers' projections of spending need and took into account the provisional settlement issued by Welsh Government on 19th October 2016.

It was advised that the announced provisional settlement was significantly better than was expected, however it was recognised that the cash neutral settlement would continue to have a negative impact on the Council's resources.

In summary, the budget proposals would assume full delivery of the £24.6m identified savings. Furthermore, the budget proposals assume a Council tax increase by 2.5% in the Strategy and a 1% movement equated to +/-£790k.

The following issues were discussed during consideration of the report:

A concern was expressed regarding the £3k received for the food hygiene rating scheme, it was felt that this was a small amount to support such a large scheme. In response the Head of Financial Services stated that this was the amount of the specific grant available to deliver the scheme, and not the whole cost of providing the service

Following a query regarding the School Reserves, the Head of Financial Services informed Members that at the time of the report the expectation was that the majority of schools would have already utilised their budget reserves for the coming year. However, should they have not utilised the reserves, they would be able to provide an explanation to the Chief Education Officer for decision as to whether they would be able to carry their reserves forward to the next financial period.

Concerns were raised regarding to the potential additional costs which could be attributed to the Well Being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 (WBFG). The Assistant Chief Executive (Regeneration & Policy) informed members that whilst there should be no additional costs attributed to delivering the Well Being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015, she reassured Members that costs would be monitored. However, the Committee was reminded that the Act stated that all public bodies must carry out sustainable development, improving the economic, social environmental and cultural well-being of Wales.

In response to an additional query, the Assistant Chief Executive (Regeneration & Policy) stated that the Authority would achieve this by going through a process to ensure that the five new ways of working is adopted whilst working towards the 7 well-being goals. In order to alleviate Members concerns on this matter the Assistant Chief Executive (Regeneration & Policy) suggested that a further seminar on the Well Being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 be arranged. After being put to the Committee, this was agreed.

A question was asked how many people had visited Pembrey Country Park and how much income was the park generating? The Head of Leisure informed the Committee that there were around 400,000 paying visitors in the last year, however, it was difficult to provide an exact number of visitors due to the many access points around the park area. Furthermore, there were many different income streams including the ski centre, car park and the caravan/camping facility. Unfortunately, the loss of the Big Beach Live had been a significant impact on revenue, however, this had been offset by a number smaller events being held over the year.

It was resolved that:-

6.1 The Committee receive the report,

6.2 An all member seminar on the Well Being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 would be arranged.

7. FIVE YEAR CAPITAL PROGRAMME - 2017/18 - 2021/22

The Committee considered the Five Year Capital Programme 2017/18 to 2021/22 (Appendix A) which had been endorsed by the Executive Board for consultation purposes at its meeting on 21st November 2016. It was noted that feedback from the consultation process, along with the outcome of the final settlement, would inform the final budget report which would be presented to members for consideration in February, 2017.

The proposed capital programme was £208m over the 5 years, which aimed to deliver a number of key projects including, to create jobs and improve the quality of life for the people of Carmarthenshire.

The report highlighted the provisional settlement received from the Welsh Government on the 19th October 2016, which indicated capital funding of £9.400m for the Authority in 2017-18. The funding was made up of Supported Borrowing of £5.844m and General Capital Grant of £3.556m. It was noted that in the absence of any forward indications by Welsh Government this level of funding had been assumed for each year of the five year programme.

In summary, the overall position of the capital programme was funded for the first 4 years from 2017/18 to 2020/21 with a current shortfall of £3.123m in the final year of the programme 2021/22.

The following issues were discussed during consideration of the report:

In response to a query regarding the future of external funding the Assistant Chief Executive (Regeneration & Policy) stated that European Funding would cease as a result of Brexit and that it was hoped that the Welsh Government would assist in providing some of the shortfall. However, the Authority would continue to seek alternative funding opportunities.

It was asked about the current position of the improvement works to Carmarthenshire County Museum Abergwili. The Head of Leisure informed the Committee that improvement work had commenced and that some funding had been allocated from the current financial year. Furthermore, an additional application would seek further funds in 2018/19.

Reference was made to Safe Routes in the Communities where it was asked why there was no Carmarthenshire Council funding in 2018/19. The Head of Transportation & Highways stated that the figures were indicative at this stage. Furthermore, throughout the year communities would be invited to apply for a scheme. The Authority is permitted to bid for 3 schemes per annum, each application is assessed against the criteria for the grant as determined by the Wales Government. The authority is allowed to submit bids for 3 schemes per annum. The figures included within the programme were indicative amounts but are dependent of the outcome of the bidding process. It was noted that there were limited funds in relation to County Farms. The Head of Property advised that the funding in 2017/18 was in addition to funds allocated in the current and previous years. In addition that portfolio would continue to receive appropriate maintenance from the general capital maintenance budget each year. Furthermore, members were informed that the fund would be primarily utilised to ensure that Council Farm Houses were brought up to a reasonable standard.

Concerns were raised regarding the A4138 Hendy Link Road and the lack of plans in place to fund any improvements. The Head of Transportation & Highways stated that discussions were currently taking place with Welsh Government and the Trunk Road Agency. In response to an additional concern regarding the closure of the junction the Head of Transportation & Highways stated that there were no plans to close the junction, The investment priorities are set out in the approved Local Transport Plan and schemes are developed accordingly.

It was asked, who would be maintaining the Towy Valley Cycle Way? The Head of Transportation & Highways stated that whilst Carmarthen County Council would have some responsibility there were ongoing discussions with relevant partners.

A concern was raised in relation to road repair at Dafen that was not completed to a satisfactory standard. The Head of Transportation & Highways requested the Member for more information to be forwarded to him.

Resolved to note the Five Year Capital Programme 2017/18 to 2021/22.

8. ENVIRONMENT'S DEPARTMENTAL BUSINESS PLAN 2017-20

The Committee considered the Report on the Environment's Departmental Business Plan 2017-20. The report contained extracts of the aspects relevant to the Community Scrutiny which provided an outline of the priorities for the department during 2017-20. The report identified how the department supported the 5 Ways of Working and the 7 Goals of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015.

The following issues were discussed during consideration of the update:

An update was requested on the new revised Rights of Way Improvement Plan. The Head of Transportation & Highways informed the Committee that the countryside realignment was in the process of being completed. The work is in hand in order to ensure that the Plan was completed by the end of 2017.

In response to a query regarding the Bwcabus project, the Head of Transportation & Highways stated that he had recently been successful in securing additional funding for an enhanced scheme.

RESOLVED to note the Environment's Departmental Business Plan 2017-2020

9. COMMUNITIES DEPARTMENTAL SUMMARY BUSINESS PLAN 2017-20

The Committee considered the Report on the Communities Departmental Business Plan 2017-20. The report provided a summary business plan and an update of progress made against actions for Housing and Leisure Services, which are included in the departmental business plan from 2017-20.

The following issues were discussed during consideration of the update:

Following a query the Assistant Chief Executive (Regeneration & Policy) provided the committee with a brief update on the Wellness and Life Science project. Overall the project would cost nearly £200m, with over £127m anticipated to come from the private sector. Furthermore, tremendous support had been received from external agencies including Hywel Dda and Abertawe Bro Morgannwg University (ABMU) Health Board's. The Assistant Chief Executive (Regeneration & Policy) offered to arrange a seminar in order to provide Members with more details. After being put to the Committee this was agreed.

Following a concern regarding the Llangennech to Dafen Cycle Path, the Head of Transportation and Highways clarified that the Cycling infrastructure was grant funded and in accordance with the Authority's statutory duties as set out in the Active Travel Act. The work in the section of cycleway and footway was the first phase to link communities to employment sites.

In response to an additional query, the Head of Leisure informed the Committee that a bid to host a stage of the Tour of Britain was currently being considered which could provide an injection of an estimated £40k into the local economy.

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In response to a query regarding Burry Port Harbour, the Head of Leisure recognised that there were associated challenges and costs and stated that further decisions would be required politically by the Authority. A report would be provided to the next meeting.

In response to a query regarding the replacement of the mobile library fleet, the Head of Leisure stated it was programmed to work closely with the Communications Team in February 2017, in order to widely publicise the new and improved service of the mobile libraries. Following an additional query, the Head of Leisure confirmed that consultation had taken place, but was not all completed yet.

An update was requested with regard to the review of archive service. The Head of Leisure stated that £2m from the capital programme had been allocated to the new archive facility which would be located at the rear of Carmarthen Library. Furthermore, there were currently some challenges in relation to obtaining planning permission as the new location was a listed property. However, the proposed plans were currently being shared with friends of archives in order for them to have their say. The Head of Leisure stated that he would share plans and the timeline with the Committee.

Following an additional query, the Head of Leisure stated that during the development of the new archive facility, it was anticipated that the adjoining Community Education Centre would remain open, however, some disruption to services may occur.

In response to a query, the Head of Housing and Public Protection informed the Committee that currently over 20 fuel clubs existed throughout Carmarthenshire which enabled residents to save up to £200 on their annual fuel bill. Furthermore, a conscious effort was being made to make more links the elderly to ensure that they are aware of the Clubs that are available to them.

RESOLVED to:

- 9.1 note the Communities Departmental Summary Business Plan 2017-20;**
- 9.2 arrange an all member seminar on the Wellness and Life Science project.**

10. CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S DEPARTMENTAL BUSINESS PLAN 2017-20

The Committee considered the Report on the Chief Executive's Departmental Business Plan 2017-20. The report contained extracts of the aspects relevant to the Community Scrutiny which provided an outline of the Regeneration Property and projects work within the Chief Executive's Department and the Special Project on the Wellness and Life Science Village. The report identified how the department supported the 5 Ways of Working and the 7 Goals of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015.

The Assistant Chief Executive (Regeneration & Policy) highlighted that external funding opportunities had been successful such as the LEADER programme where 13 projects totalling £642,000 have been supported to date. The Rural Community Development Fund, where 8 projects totalling investment of £1.28m, have been assisted through to the second stage of the application process.

The following issues were discussed during consideration of the update:

In response to a query with regard to creating jobs and growth throughout the County, the Assistant Chief Executive (Regeneration & Policy) informed the Committee that as part of Carmarthenshire's Corporate Strategy 2015-20 the key area of focus would be to strengthen business support services, which would be achieved by working closely with new business start-ups.

An update was requested in relation to the Beacon Bursary. The Assistant Chief Executive (Regeneration & Policy) stated that this area was currently being reviewed whilst concentrating on what was important to the young people and businesses, this would enable a more focussed approach moving forward.

Following a query regarding the Ageing Well in Wales Plan, the Assistant Chief Executive (Regeneration & Policy) explained to the Committee that, as a signatory to the Dublin Declaration of Age Friendly Cities and Communities, the Authority, had a responsibility to provide an Ageing Well in Wales Plan which would contribute to one overarching objective; to ensure that Wales is a good place to grow older for everyone. The overall aim of the Ageing Well in Wales Plan was to join-up the Council's diverse services in order to support independent living and to help older people live in their communities. The Plan would assist in meeting Council responsibilities under the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014.

It was noted that the Plan was scheduled to be presented to the Policy and Resources Scrutiny Committee in January 2017. The Assistant Chief Executive (Regeneration & Policy) stated that she would ensure that the Ageing Well in Wales Plan was shared with this Committee.

RESOLVED to note the Chief Executive's Departmental Business Plan 2017-20

11. CARMARTHENSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL GUIDANCE AND SERVICE LEVEL AGREEMENT ON CHARGEABLE PRE-APPLICATION AND POST-CONSENT ADVICE IN RELATION TO NATIONALLY SIGNIFICANT INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECTS (NSIP) (PLANNING ACT 2008) AND DEVELOPMENTS OF NATIONAL SIGNIFICANCE (DNS) (PLANNING (WALES) ACT 2015)

The Committee considered the Report on the introduction of charges for pre-application advice given to developers preparing DNS applications for submission to the Planning Inspectorate and to consider updating the existing guidance/fees relating to NSIPs. The Charging would also apply to post-consent advice and discharging of responsibilities in relation to consent planning conditions, and monitoring.

The Development Management Manager informed the Committee that set fees, time and costs were currently being considered. Furthermore, Members were informed that NSIPs and DNSs were major infrastructure developments in England and Wales such as proposals for power plants, large renewable energy projects, new airports and airport extensions, major road projects etc. NSIPs were defined in the Planning Act 2008, whilst a DNS definition was contained within the Planning (Wales) Act 2015. NSIP and DNS applications were submitted to the Planning Inspectorate (Pins), for assessment and recommendation.

Recommendations on NSIP applications would be sent to the relevant Secretary of State for decision, whilst the Welsh Ministers determine DNS applications.

For information the Development Management Manager stated that a consultation in relation to the proposed Brechfa North Windfarm had commenced and that the company was currently liaising with the community.

RESOLVED to note the Carmarthenshire County Council Guidance and Service Level Agreement on Chargeable Pre-application and Post-consent Advice in Relation to Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIP) (Planning Act 2008) and Developments of National Significance (DNS) (Planning (Wales) Act 2015).

12. REVENUE CAPITAL BUDGET MONITORING REPORT 2016/17

The Committee considered the Revenue and Capital Budget Monitoring Report 2016/17. The report provided members with budget monitoring information for the Housing, Regeneration, Planning and Leisure & Recreation Services and considered the budgetary position. In summary, the revenue budget for the services within the Community Scrutiny remit were forecasting a £196k overspend. Whereas, the main variances on capital schemes showed a forecasted net spend of £18,246k compared with a working net budget of £24,816k giving a £-6,570k variance.

Following a query in relation to shop located at Pembrey Ski Centre, the Head of Housing and Public Protection stated that the shop was reducing stock in readiness for closure.

RESOLVED to note the Revenue and Capital Budget Monitoring Report 2016/17.

13. TO SIGN AS A CORRECT RECORD THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 3RD NOVEMBER 2016

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Community Scrutiny Committee held on the 3rd November 2016 be signed as a correct record.

CHAIR

DATE