

# COMMUNITY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Friday, 11 May 2018

**PRESENT:** Councillor S.L. Davies (Chair)

**Councillors:**

S.M. Allen (In place of H.B. Shepardson), D.M. Cundy, C.A. Davies, W.R.A. Davies, W.T. Evans (In place of H.L. Davies), S.J.G. Gilasbey, B.W. Jones, H.I. Jones, B.A.L. Roberts, G.B. Thomas and A.Vaughan Owen

**Also in attendance:**

Councillor L.D. Evans, Executive Board Member for Housing  
P. Hughes-Griffiths, Executive Board Member for Culture, Sport and Tourism

**The following Officers were in attendance:**

I. Jones, Head of Leisure  
H. Morgan, Economic Development Manager  
L. Quelch, Head of Planning  
S. Walters, Economic Development Manager  
J. Morgan, Acting Head of Homes & Safer Communities  
J. Willis, Housing Services Manager (Advice & Options)  
R James, Performance Planning & Business Officer  
R. Evans, Home Improvement Agency Manager  
I.R. Llewelyn, Forward Planning Manager  
B Lovering, Forward Planning Officer  
K. Thomas, Democratic Services Officer

**Chamber, - County Hall, Carmarthen. SA31 1JP. - 10.00 - 11.55 am**

**1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors H. Davies, S. Matthews and H. Shepardson

**2. DECLARATIONS OF PERSONAL INTERESTS**

Councillor	Minute Number	Nature of Interest
A. Vaughan-Owen	9 – Draft Supplementary Planning Guidance – Wind and Solar Energy – Carmarthenshire Local Development Plan	Recently awarded a contract with Innogy U.K.

**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. DRAFT NEW CORPORATE STRATEGY 2018-23**

The Committee received for consideration sections of the draft new Corporate Strategy 2018-23 relevant to its remit. It was noted that the New Strategy would replace the current one published in 2015 and would consolidate the following plans into one document:-

- the 2015-20 Corporate Strategy;
- the Improvement Objectives, as required by the Local Government Measure 2009;
- The Wellbeing Objectives as required by the Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 – these did not have to change every year, or be deliverable within one year and it was perfectly legitimate to set objectives which spanned more than one year;
- Carmarthenshire County Council's Executive Board key projects and Programmes for the next 5 years, as set out in "Moving Forward in Carmarthenshire: the next 5 years".

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

- Reference was made to the Council's Community Asset Transfer Scheme, and clarification sought on whether the Council would be able to offer financial assistance to voluntary organisations/community groups which may wish to take over an asset for which no interest had been expressed by the 31<sup>st</sup> March 2018 deadline.

The Head of Leisure advised that the Property Division were co-ordinating this work, and whilst he understood the Community Asset Transfer Scheme and the financial incentives associated therewith had expired, if any organisations expressed an interest in taking on one of those assets, the Council would work with them in an enabling role and signpost them to any grant assistance which may be available. That support would also extend to any organisation which had taken over / were in the process of taking over an asset.

- Reference was made to the operation of the Council's Library service in relation to the well-being objective of Promoting Welsh Culture and Heritage and information sought on the number of front line library staff who could speak Welsh.

The Committee was advised that arrangements could be made for it to be provided with information on the numbers of Welsh Speakers amongst the authority's staff.

- Reference was made to the promotion of the Welsh Language within businesses, especially, those starting up within the County and to whether there were any measures the Council could take to promote increased use of the Welsh language possibly, via Special Planning Guidance.

The Head of Planning confirmed that the authority was, wherever possible trying to promote the Welsh Language as part of the planning process for example, the provision of bilingual signs, with that approach being in the form of guidance at the current time. Consideration was also being given to the possibility of using Supplementary Planning Guidance as part of the LDP review as a means of promoting the language. Gwynedd County Council was also examining that possibility and the authority was liaising with that authority in that regard,

- Reference was made on the issue of mental health within Wales and its impact on both adults and children. The Committee was advised that a link to appropriate organisations dealing with that issue would be included within the document
- Reference was made to the issue of Childhood obesity with 30.7% of 4-5 year olds within Carmarthenshire being recorded as overweight or obese. The Committee was advised that the figures in question were compiled on a national basis by NHS Wales and that consideration could be given to providing a link thereto within the document. It was also confirmed that whilst Carmarthenshire had one of the highest rates of childhood obesity in Wales, including those classed as overweight, the authority was working in partnership with other organisations including the Public Service Board and the Health Authority in an endeavour to reduce those levels.
- The Head of Leisure in response to comments, confirmed the difficulties encountered in encouraging children to retain an interest in sporting activities during their teens. Whilst proving difficult, work was being undertaken in partnership with external organisations such as Sport Wales and the schools to attempt to reverse that trend.
- Officers advised that based on members comments a number of the 'Actions and Measures' in the Strategy would be strengthened prior to submission to the Executive Board.

**RESOLVED to recommend to the Executive Board that the draft new Corporate Strategy 2018-23 be endorsed**

## **6. HOMELESSNESS STRATEGY**

The Committee received for consideration a report on the development of a Homelessness Strategy produced in accordance with the requirements of the Housing Act Wales (2014) which introduced new responsibilities on local authorities to prevent homelessness. The report outlined the approach adopted by the Authority to date and the following 5 key areas to be addressed prior to formal adoption of the Strategy by the December 2018 deadline:-

- Review of data and information;
- Stakeholder engagement;
- Strategy Development and Statement of Principles;
- Development of local action plans;
- Formal public consultation on Draft Strategy and Action Plan.

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

- The Acting Head of Homes and Safer Communities in response to a question confirmed the number of persons from outside Carmarthenshire presenting themselves to the authority as homeless were relatively small, with the majority of presenters coming from within the County.
- Reference was made to the reduction in the number of persons defined as being homeless within Carmarthenshire from in excess of 500 in 2013 to 135 in 2016. The Housing Services Manager (Advice and Options) advised that was attributable to a change in approach adopted by the Authority whereby it had invested more in the service and was more pro-active with the emphasis being on prevention. For 2017, some 1300 persons were at risk of becoming homeless. Of those, only 160 fell within the authority's duty to rehouse, with 128 having been rehoused.

- In response to a question on housing single homeless men, the Committee was advised that whilst local authorities in Wales did not have a duty to house those persons, unless they were vulnerable, the authority did, with the assistance of its social housing partners endeavour to provide assistance wherever possible. One of the challenges facing the new strategy would be how it addressed single persons who did not have a priority need.
- It was confirmed that persons facing homelessness could contact the authority 24 hours a day via its care line service
- With regard to persons who may be classed as being intentionally homeless, each case was treated on its merit with advice and assistance being provided on an individual basis

**UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND to the Executive Board that:-**

**6.1 The approach and consultation plan be approved**

**6.2 To confirm the Council's intention to develop opportunities to work on a regional basis.**

## **7. AMENDMENT TO THE PRIVATE SECTOR RENEWAL POLICY**

The Committee received for consideration an amendment to the Council's Private Sector Renewal Policy reflecting changes introduced by the Welsh Government to its Home Improvement Loan and Houses into Homes Schemes. As part of that proposal the Authority would receive £1.25m to support all forms of financial assistance for homeowners to maintain their home.

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

- It was confirmed that the new policy would allow landlords to apply for funding of up to £250k per application for up to 10 properties (£25k per property) representing an increase on the previous award of a maximum of £150k per application for 6 properties (£25k per property)
- In response to a question on the Committees' previous Task and Finish Group on empty properties, it was confirmed a report could be submitted to a future meeting providing an update on the work subsequently undertaken, which could include the number of properties brought back into use and any enforcement activities.
- It was confirmed that to date there had been no defaults in loan repayments and all loans were secured against the property.

**UNAUNIMOUSLY RESOLVED to recommend to the Executive Board that the Welsh Government's revised Home Improvement Loan and Houses to Homes Scheme criteria be adopted, and that the Authority's Private Sector Renewal Policy be amended to reflect those changes.**

## **8. REVISED CARMARTHENSHIRE LOCAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN 2018 - 2033 DRAFT DELIVERY AGREEMENT**

The Committee received for consideration a Draft Delivery Agreement produced in response to the Council's decision on the 10<sup>th</sup> January, 2018 to formally commence preparation on a revised (replacement) Local Development Plan (LDP) following a period of public consultation that expired on the 23<sup>rd</sup> March. It was

noted that subject to Council confirming the Draft Agreement, it would then need to be submitted to the Welsh Government for its approval.

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

- It was confirmed that the invitations for expressions in relation to Candidate Sites would be relaunched the following week and local members would be provided with details of the appropriate departmental contact points for their ward.
- Reference was made to the practice of land banking and to whether, as part of the revised LDP, existing planning consents could be withdrawn if landowners had not demonstrated a desire to deliver a development.

The Forward Planning Manager confirmed that, as part of the revised LDP process, prospective developers wishing to have land included within the plan would have to demonstrate its development was deliverable, an expression of desire to develop would no longer be sufficient. Should that not occur there was a possibility land allocated within previous Local Plans may not be included as an allocation in the new Plan. That is, there is no automatic re-inclusion or indeed guaranteed inclusion for currently allocated sites in terms of the new LDP.

- Reference was made to planning consents issued under the current Plan, and to applications being received for their renewal. It was confirmed that consideration of those would be made in accordance with existing planning policies. However as the review progressed, there may be a possibility consent may not be renewed or may only be granted for a much shorter period of time e.g. one year. An applicant could appeal against the non-inclusion of a parcel of land within the revised LDP.
- In response to a question on town and community council involvement with place plans, the Forward Planning Manager confirmed that whilst meetings had been held with 3 community councils there was a general degree of confusion on the plans and a need for greater level of understanding thereon. The Forward Planning Team will help where they can, but there was reference to the level of resources available and that the resource would need to be primarily focussed on delivering the new LDP. There was a role for other bodies such as Planning Aid Wales in also assisting Town and Community Councils

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

- 8.1 The representations received and the recommendations in respect of the Draft Delivery Agreement be noted**
- 8.2 The amendments to the timetable be noted**
- 8.3 That the submission of the Delivery Agreement (inclusive of the report recommendations) to the Welsh Government for agreement be noted**
- 8.4 The extension of the consultation period for the submission of candidate sites to the 29<sup>th</sup> August, 2018 be noted.**

**9. DRAFT SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING GUIDANCE - WIND AND SOLAR ENERGY - CARMARTHENSHIRE LOCAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN**

(NOTE: Councillor A. Vaughan-Owen had previously declared an interest in this item)

The Committee received for consideration the Draft Supplementary Planning Guidance for Wind and Solar Energy which had been prepared to support and elaborate on the policies and provisions of the adopted Carmarthenshire Local Development Plan. If approved by Council, the guidance would then be subject to a six week period of public consultation prior to formal adoption.

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

- In response to a question on why Hydro Electric Power was not included within the report, the Forward Planning Manager advised that it fell within the remit of Natural Resources Wales and was already catered for within the LDP. However, should future circumstances warrant a specific SPG, consideration could be afforded thereto at the appropriate time.
- In response to a question on the impact of existing wind turbines the Forward Planning Manager confirmed whilst monitoring was undertaken of the effectiveness of the plan's policies, it did not include the impact of the individual turbines. He could however look at that issue, but not as part of the SPG process.

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

- 9.1 The Draft Supplementary Planning Guidance set out within the report be approved for public consultation for six weeks**
- 9.2 The publication be noted of the Cumulative Impact of Wind Turbines on Landscape and Visual Amenity Guidance and the Landscape Capacity and Sensitivity Studies as supporting documentation to the SPG and forthcoming revised LDP.**

## **10. COMMUNITY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME FOR 2018/19**

The Committee, in accordance with Article 6.2 of the Council's constitution considered its Forward Work Programme for 2018/19.

Reference was made to the proposed report on Ammanford and Carmarthen Regeneration to be submitted to the Committee's November meeting. A view was expressed that it would be advantageous if the presentation could be made to all members of Council by means of a seminar and to include the recent presentation received by the Committee on regeneration within Llanelli Town centre

Reference was made to the arrangements for the submission of the LDP Preferred Strategy to the Committee in July and it was noted that following the issue of correspondence from the Cabinet Secretary on the 28<sup>th</sup> March the strategy would now be submitted to the Committee towards the end of 2018.

The Committee received a report on the preliminary work undertaken to date in Ammanford on the suggested Task and Finish Group on large empty church/chapels, halls blighting town centres and commercial properties where it was advised that no significant issues had arisen.

**RESOLVED** that the 2018/19 Forward Work Programme be endorsed subject to:

- The suggested Task and Finish Group on empty properties being not progressed with
- The amended submission dated of the LDP Preferred Strategy from July to the end of 2018 be noted
- A seminar being arranged for all members of Council to provide an update from the task groups established for Ammanford and Llanelli and to also provide feedback on regeneration within Carmarthen

## **11. FORTHCOMING ITEMS**

The Committee received a list of forthcoming items to be considered at its next meeting to be held on the 25<sup>th</sup> June, 2018.

**UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED** that the list of forthcoming items for the meeting of the Committee to be held on the 25<sup>th</sup> June, 2018 be received.

## **12. EXPLANATION FOR NON-SUBMISSION OF SCRUTINY REPORT**

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

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

## **13. MINUTES - 29TH MARCH 2018**

**UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on the 29<sup>th</sup> March, 2018 be signed as a correct record.

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**CHAIR**

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**DATE**