

ENVIRONMENTAL & PUBLIC PROTECTION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

29 JUNE 2018

PRESENT: Councillor J.D. James (Chair)

Councillors:

J.A. Davies, P.M. Edwards, A.L. Fox, S.J.G. Gilasbey, T.M. Higgins, A. James, A.D.T. Speake, T.A.J. Davies, A. Vaughan Owen, B.D.J. Phillips, J.S. Phillips and D. Thomas. .

Also in attendance:

Councillor H.A.L. Evans, Executive Board Member for Environment;
Councillor P.M. Hughes, Executive Board Member for Public Protection.

The following Officers were in attendance:

R. Mullen, Director of Environment;
A. Williams, Head of Waste and Environmental Services;
L. Quelch, Head of Planning;
J. Morgan, Acting Head of Homes & Safer Communities;
S. Charles, Transport Strategy and Infrastructure Manager;
R. Edmunds, Consumer and Business Affairs Manager;
A. Kenyon, Senior Performance Management Officer;
K. Thomas, Community Safety Manager;
R. W. Waters, Highways and Transportation Manager;
R. James, Group Accountant;
J. Owen, Democratic Services Officer.

Chamber, County Hall, Carmarthen – 10:00am - 12:20pm

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies for absence.

2. DECLARATIONS OF PERSONAL INTEREST

There were no declarations of personal interest.

3. DECLARATIONS OF PROHIBITED PARTY WHIPS

There were no declarations of prohibited party whips.

4. PUBLIC QUESTIONS (NONE RECEIVED)

The Chair advised that no public questions had been received.

5. UPDATE ON TRADING STANDARDS SERVICES IN WALES

The Committee received a presentation which provided an update with regard to the current position of the National Trading Standards, Wales (Regional) Work and Local Trading Standards.

The Consumer and Business Affairs Manager explained that the Trading Standards Team operated in a proactive and reactive manner and that typically the team prioritised activities based on both national and local issues. Prevention, intervention and innovation were key in order to reduce the reoccurrence of issues and to safeguard the consumer.

The Committee was informed that in order to provide a more efficient service, the routine visits to companies had been curtailed to be able to concentrate on those companies that were likely to transgress and that the visits would be carried out based on the intelligence received.

The presentation was followed by a question and answer session.

- In relation to the diverse age range affected by issues, it was queried if there were any alternative ways that could be utilised to reach a wider age range particularly the young and elderly. The Consumer and Business Affairs Manager stated that work had been undertaken within schools to raise awareness, such as a public relations exercise for school children. In addition, engagement work with the 50+ forum was ongoing which informs members of the services provided by Trading Standards. Furthermore, through trust and confidence, the Trading Standards department had developed a successful partnership with the Banks, which in a number of cases had achieved a successful outcome.

The Executive Board Member thanked the Consumer and Business Affairs Manager and the team for their sterling work and specifically requested that his appreciation be relayed to the team.

6. REVENUE & CAPITAL BUDGET MONITORING REPORT

The Committee considered the end of year Revenue and Capital Budget Monitoring Report as at 31st March 2018 in respect of 2017/18 financial year.

The report provided members with budget monitoring information for the Environment Service, Public Protection Service and the Community Safety Service and considered the budgetary position. In summary, the revenue budget for the services within the Environment and Public Protection Scrutiny remit were forecasting a £113k underspend.

Whereas, the main variances on capital schemes showed a forecasted net spend of £8,107k compared with a working net budget of £11,987k giving a £-3,880k variance.

The following issues were raised during consideration of the report:-

- It was asked, why there was an underspend relating to a number of categories under Highways and Transportation? The Group Accountant stated that a restructuring exercise was currently underway. The Highways and Transportation Manager added that recruitment of the Assistant Structures Engineer position was currently in hand and that recently a Countryside Access Officer had been appointed. In response to a further query, the Highways and Transportation Manager explained that recruitment would be carried out on a 'tier by tier' basis and it was hoped that the Service Managers' tier would be in place within the next 3 months.
- In relation to the Towy Valley Path, it was asked, if the actual final cost of the Path was available? The Transport Strategy and Infrastructure Manager stated that due to a number of differing eventualities such as the cost of land and the unknown aspect of the mitigation costs, it was difficult to provide an actual final cost at this stage. However, reassurance was provided that the global cost included land and mitigation.

In response to a query regarding the maintenance costs of the path, the Transport Strategy and Infrastructure Manager stated that the maintenance model had not yet been finalised.

In response to a further query, the Transport Strategy and Infrastructure Manager stated that the progress of the scheme was constrained by the availability of land, this in turn dictated the order of which each section of path could be constructed.

- It was asked, what was the situation with properties that have been devalued as a result of the Cross Hands Link Road and was there any update regarding compensation? The Transport Strategy and Infrastructure Manager explained the Land Compensation Act 1974 which sets out the process for claims. However, should any issues arise during the construction phase, the Highways Department would be able to assist.
- In response to a query raised regarding the additional demand for School Crossing Patrols, the Highways and Transportation Manager explained that the School Crossing Patrol was an area currently being reviewed and that advice on a national level was being sought.
- It was queried why there had been a reduction in the quality of amenity cuts around the gateways of towns and villages. As an example, it was raised that the gateway into Carmarthen Town had been left unsightly due to a poor quality maintenance cut and clearance. It was felt that the in general the maintenance of the gateways of towns and villages had been neglected and should be restored in order to provide a display of pride to the area. The Highways and Transportation Manager stated that he would be happy to arrange a site meeting where issues regarding quality of amenity cuts was a concern.

Arising from the above, it was suggested that it may be beneficial for the Committee to receive a presentation on the Authority's approach to amenity grass cutting at a future meeting. The Committee agreed to the suggestion and the Highways and Transportation Manager stated that he would arrange for a presentation to be provided.

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that the report be received.

7. DRAFT - CARMARTHENSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL'S ANNUAL REPORT FOR 2017/18

The Committee considered the Council's Draft Annual Report for 2017/18 produced in accordance with the requirements of both the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2009 and the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015. It was noted that the report provided:-

- An overview of the 2017/18 performance,
- Two page progress reports for each of the 15 Well-being Objectives,
- A link to track progress on every specific action and target set for each Well-being objective,
- Within the appendices, other performance information on Out-turn data (September) and National Survey for Wales Results (June) which would be updated as results became available.

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

- Reference was made to well-being objective 8 – Eat and breathe healthily. It was raised that with regard to the national attempt to reduce sugary drinks and in conjunction with the global efforts to eradicate single-use plastic, it was asked what the Leisure Centres across Carmarthenshire were doing to assist in these efforts? The Acting Head of Homes & Safer Communities stated that a new catering offer was currently being considered and would be implemented in all Leisure Centre's in Carmarthenshire.
Arising from the above and in light of the Council's decision to reduce the use of single-use plastic where possible, it was requested that these issues be considered when drawing up the new catering offer.
- In relation to the commitment to monitor air quality (nitrogen dioxide) for the residents of and visitors to the County, it was asked if it was possible to provide real-time results by means of instant communication eg. text messages. This method was currently used for those who subscribe to receive high UV and pollen updates. The Acting Head of Homes & Safer Communities stated that whilst the Committee receive an annual update on the air quality monitoring which takes place in Carmarthen and Llandeilo he would consider the provision of real-time air quality information further and include in the update report.

- A query was raised in relation to the Welsh Language and what processes the Council had in place to recruit Welsh speakers. The Head of Waste and Environmental Services explained that with every job profile the standard of Welsh required for the post was identified and reviewed by the Policy and Resources team. In order to gain a greater understanding of the process as a whole, it was suggested an outline of the process along with the levels of fluency be forwarded to Committee members by e-mail.
- In response to a comment regarding links between the Local Development Plan and the private sector in order to encourage use of the Welsh Language in businesses, the Head of Planning explained that work was currently on-going with Pembrokeshire Council, Ceredigion Council and the private sector to collectively seek a common approach across Wales.
- Reference was made to Well-being Objective 12, Healthy and Safe Environment – look after the environment now and in the future. Clarity was sought on the ambitious targets set in relation to the amount of energy generated from renewable technologies and how close the Council was to achieving these targets. The Committee was informed that it was not possible to provide this information to members today, however an update would be provided at the next meeting.
- Reference was made to Well-being Objective 13 - Healthy and Safe Environment and the commitment to minimise the % of principal (A) roads and non-principal (B and C) roads. It was asked if there was a way of targeting these roads to bring them up to the required standard. The Highways and Transportation Manager stated that whilst the road conditions of the roads had improved, unfortunately investments don't often keep pace with the deterioration rate of the roads and therefore it was necessary to prioritise investments accordingly. Furthermore, the Annual Statement and Options Report (ASOR) which was a supplement report to the Highway Asset Management Plan (HAMP) included regular updates on the current state of the highway assets and their performance over the preceding 12 months.
- A concern was raised regarding the increase of Welsh house names being changed to an English name which risked losing the Welsh history associated to the property/area. The Head of Planning stated that legally the Council was unable to stop householders changing the name of their property, however, when requests were received a dialogue with the householders was carried out encouraging them to reconsider their request order to preserve the Welsh Language and its heritage. The Head of Planning stated that she would raise this matter with the LDP regional group.

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND TO EXECUTIVE BOARD that the Draft Carmarthenshire County Council's Annual Report for 2017/18 be endorsed.

8. CARMARTHENSHIRE CYCLING STRATEGY

The Committee considered the Carmarthenshire Cycling Strategy which provided a clear strategic direction that supported the Council's aspirations to be a national lead in the provision of cycling infrastructure events and development. The Strategy also assisted in meeting a number of objectives set out in the Active Travel Act (Wales) 2013, Welsh Cycling Strategy and Well-being of Future Generations Act and also tied in with the 5 year plan – Moving Forward in Carmarthenshire.

The Strategy focussed on 3 key themes which included:

- Infrastructure;
- Events and ambitions to attract events;
- Pathways and initiatives.

The Strategy had been developed, following a period of comprehensive consultation with key stakeholders and the general public.

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

- Reference was made to the map displaying the cycle network in Carmarthenshire. It was queried if there was going to be a cycling provision between Crosshands and the Amman Valley as this remained a void in the network. The Transport Strategy and Infrastructure Manager stated the development of this area would be considered in the medium term.
- Following a comment regarding the plans for a cycle path between Whitland and Llanboidy known as the Cardi Bach route which had not come to fruition, the Transport Strategy and Infrastructure Manager stated that currently the focus was on the Towy Valley Path and that such schemes were enhanced by Welsh Government. Furthermore, it was explained that a significant proportion of the route interfaced with South Wales Trunk Road Agency (SWTRA) which had been part of discussions along with Pembrokeshire County Council.
- With regard to the Cycle to Work Scheme available to staff members, it was asked if there were figures available on how many staff opted into the scheme and how many currently cycle to work. The Transport Strategy and Infrastructure Manager stated that he was not aware of any data having been collected, however it was an area that could be considered in order to provide further evidence for Carmarthenshire as the cycling hub of Wales.

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that the Carmarthenshire Cycling Strategy be received.

9. UPDATE ON PROGRESS IN DELIVERING CARMARTHENSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL'S ENVIRONMENT ACT FORWARD PLAN

The Committee considered an update report on progress in delivering Carmarthenshire County Council's Environment Act Forward Plan which was published in March 2017. The report provided was in addition to publishing an Environment Act Forward Plan, in readiness to assist in the report to Welsh Government in 2019, when public bodies are required to report on how they have met the Biodiversity and Resilient Ecosystem Duty.

The report detailed how progress had been delivered within the 35 actions set out in the Council's Environment Act Forward Plan 2017.

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

- Strong concern was raised with regard to the amount of work that was outstanding which was reflected within report as 'off target' performance along with the unreported updates. The Head of Planning explained that that all the actions were circulated to the relevant Heads of Service when they were drafted however, some had overlooked the first reporting round and as a result some of the actions were not reported on in March 2018. Reassurance was provided to the Committee that despite the lack of reporting, progress in delivery had been achieved.
- It was commented that this update was welcomed and that it was pleasing to note the Council was embracing new schemes such as 'pride in your patch' and was working in Collaboration and in partnership with Town and Community Councils.

The Chair took this opportunity to remind the Committee, as agreed, arrangements would be made in September 2018, for Members of the Environmental and Public Protection Scrutiny Committee to participate in a litter pick whilst having an opportunity to discuss issues with enforcement officers.

RESOLVED that the Update report on progress in delivering Carmarthenshire County Council's Environment Act Forward Plan be received.

10. EXPLANATION FOR NON-SUBMISSION OF SCRUTINY REPORT

The Committee noted the non-submission of the Compliments and Complaints Annual Report 2017/18 and the Service Delivery Plan – Environmental Protection Services. Both reports had been deferred by Officers to the next meeting scheduled to take place on 1st October 2018.

Resolved that the non-submission of scrutiny reports be noted.

11. FORTHCOMING ITEMS

The Committee received the forthcoming items for the next meeting scheduled to take place on 1st October 2018. The Committee also noted the revised Environmental and Public Protection Scrutiny Committee Forward Work Plan for 2018/19.

The Chair reported to the Committee that he had recently received two Scrutiny Topic Suggestions for the Committee both of which had been e-mailed to members of the Committee prior to the meeting. The suggestions were considered by the Committee as follows:-

- 1) Scrutiny Topic Suggestion made by Llanelli Town Council -
The problems in relation to the recent fly infestation within Llanelli be investigated.

In light of the recent incident involving the fly infestation in Llanelli, the Committee requested to receive a report on the management process and response arrangements for dealing with similar infestation incidents.

- 2) Scrutiny Topic Suggestion made by Myddfai Community Council -
The illegal use of Public Rights of Way (PRoW) and Bridleways by excessive number of off road bikes and 4x4 vehicles.

The Committee acknowledged that whilst matters relating to the illegal use of PRoW would typically be a matter for Police enforcement, the Committee was minded that in some cases there would be a maintenance cost attributed to Council in the aftermath of such incidents and requested to receive a report outlining the ways in which the Council could assist in controlling the issues through prevention.

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED

11.1 that the list of forthcoming items be received;

11.2 that the revised Forward Work Programme be received;

11.3 that the additional reports requested be included on the E&PP Scrutiny Committee Forward Work Programme for 1st October, 2018.

12. TO RECEIVE THE MINUTES OF THE JOINT MEETING OF THE ENVIRONMENTAL & PUBLIC PROTECTION AND SOCIAL CARE & HEALTH SCRUTINY COMMITTEES, HELD ON THE 21ST MAY 2018

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Joint Committee meeting held on 21st May 2018, be received.

13. TO SIGN AS A CORRECT RECORD THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE COMMITTEE HELD ON THE:

13.1. 20TH APRIL 2018

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Environment and Public Protection Scrutiny Committee held on the 20th April, 2018 be signed as a correct record.

13.2. 18TH MAY 2018

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Environment and Public Protection Scrutiny Committee held on the 18th May, 2018 be signed as a correct record.

CHAIR

DATE