

COMMUNITY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Thursday, 13 December 2018

PRESENT: Councillor G.B. Thomas (Chair)

Councillors:

K.V. Broom (In place of S.J.G. Gilasbey), C.A. Davies, W.R.A. Davies, H.L. Davies, B.W. Jones 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

D.M. Jenkins, Executive Board Member for Resources

The following Officers were in attendance:

I. Jones, Head of Leisure

L. Quelch, Head of Planning

J. Morgan, Acting Head of Homes & Safer Communities

S. Pilliner, Head of Transportation & Highways

R. Hemingway, Head of Financial Services

H. Morgan, Economic Development Manager

S. Walters, Economic Development Manager

S. Sauro, Performance, Analysis & Systems Manager

J. Jones, Property and Major Projects Manager

S Charles, Transport Strategy and Infrastructure Manager

K. Thomas, Democratic Services Officer

J. Laimann, Assistant Democratic Services Officer

Chamber & Ante Room, - 3, Spilman Street, Carmarthen. SA31 1LE. - 2.00 - 3.20 pm

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors D. Cundy, S. Davies, J. Gilasbey, H.I. Jones and H. Shepardonson.

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

Councillor	Minute Number	Nature of Interest
A. Vaughan Owen	4 – Revenue Budget Strategy Consultation 2019/20 to 2021/22	Licence holder for Gwendraeth Sports Hall

3. PUBLIC QUESTIONS (NONE RECEIVED)

No public questions had been received.

4. REVENUE BUDGET STRATEGY CONSULTATION 2019/20 to 2021/22

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

The Committee considered the Revenue Budget Strategy 2019/20 to 2021/22 (Appendix A) which had been endorsed by the Executive Board for consultation purposes at its meeting on the 19th November 2018. The report provided Members with the current view of the Revenue Budget for 2019/2020 together with indicative figures for the 2020/2021 and 2021/2022 financial years. The report was based on officers' projections of spending need and took into account the provisional settlement issued by Welsh Government on 9th October 2018.

The Head of Financial Services advised whilst the announced provisional settlement represented a 0.3% reduction as an average across Wales on the 18/19 settlement, the impact on Carmarthenshire, after taking into account factors such as meeting the cost of the teachers' pay award and free school meals eligibility, was a 0.5% reduction equating to £1.873m.

In summary, the budget proposals would assume full delivery of the £28m identified savings over the plan period. Furthermore, the budget proposals assumed a Council tax increase of 4.89% for 2019/20.

The Head of Financial Services also advised that subsequent to the publication of the council's budget proposals for consultation, the Welsh Government's Cabinet Secretary for Finance had announced an additional £13m to be added to the Welsh Revenue Support Grant for 2019/20. Whilst specific details of the announcement had yet to be received, it had been estimated the impact for Carmarthenshire would be a reduction in the anticipated funding deficit from 0.5% to 0.3% over the 18/19 settlement. Additionally, the Welsh Government had announced an extra £7.5m grant across Wales to part fund the teachers' pay award. However, that was for one year only.

The Committee thereupon considered the following detailed budget information appended to the Strategy relevant to its remit:

- **Appendix A(i)** – Efficiency summary for the Regeneration, Leisure, Planning and Non HRA Housing Services;
- **Appendix A(ii)** – Growth Pressures summary for the Planning Service (none for the Regeneration, Leisure and Non HRA Services);
- **Appendix B** – Budget extracts for the Regeneration, Leisure, Planning and Non HRA Housing Services;
- **Appendix C** – Charging Digest for the Regeneration, Leisure, Planning and Non HRA Housing Services;

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

- The Committee's attention was drawn to the Councils' efficiency savings and to the current position whereby primary schools were responsible for funding the cost of swimming lessons, which had previously been borne by Leisure Services. As schools were facing reductions to their budgets, and the cost of providing the lessons was becoming a cause of concern for some, a suggestion was made that the Executive Board give consideration to the Council funding the estimated £150k cost direct. Should that be possible, it would help improve children's fitness levels, improve their safety near water by teaching them to swim and have regard to the aims of the Well-being of Future Generations Act.

The Head of Leisure advised that as a result of the above, some schools had reduced the numbers of pupils receiving swimming lessons, in the main to key stage 2 pupils. He also reminded the Committee that the Welsh Government had previously provided free swimming during school holidays for children under 16 years of age and it was currently reviewing that provision.

The Head of Financial Services reminded the Committee that the current proposals represented a balanced budget, and if the proposal was to be endorsed, the additional estimated £150k cost would either have to be met from reductions in other service areas or by increasing the council tax.

- The Head of Leisure in response to a request for an explanation on the projected 190K operating deficit for the St Clears Leisure Centre in 2019/20, advised that a significant element thereof related to non-controllable costs such as corporate costs, central recharges, repayment of capital loans to fund improvements to the centre together with rates of £36k. The department, being acutely aware of the need to generate income/reduce operating costs, was developing an options appraisals for the centre with a view to increasing revenue/participation rates that included discussions with the Town and Community Council and various sports organisations/clubs. However, it should also be recognised that the provision of leisure facilities in rural areas would always be more challenging than for urban areas.

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that:

- 5.1 The 2019/20 – 2021/22 Revenue Budget Strategy Consultation be received.**
- 5.2 The Charging Digest for the Regeneration, Leisure, Planning and Non HRA Services, as detailed in Appendix C to the report be endorsed.**
- 5.3 That the Executive Board be requested to give consideration to funding the estimated £150k cost to primary schools of providing school swimming lessons.**

5. COMMUNITIES DEPARTMENTAL DRAFT BUSINESS PLAN 2019/20 - 2022

The Committee considered the Communities Departmental Draft Business Plan 2019/20 – 2022 in relation to those services falling within its remit i.e. Housing Services and Leisure Services. It was noted that further work would be undertaken on the draft for completion by April 2019.

The following issues/questions were raised on the report:

- Reference was made to the Council's ambition of becoming the 'cycling hub of Wales'. Whilst the current road cycling provision, which included the Tywi Valley Cycling Way, Carmarthen Velodrome and the closed circuit cycling track at Pembrey were welcomed, clarification was sought on whether the Cycling Strategy included provision for off-road cycling for example, at Brechfa Forest.

The Head of Leisure confirmed the Strategy catered for all forms of cycling disciplines, including off-roading and a recent meeting had been held with

Welsh Cycling to discuss that provision at various venues. Those included land in the council's ownership at Pembrey Country Park and Mynydd Mawr and at Brechfa Forest, which was owned by Natural Resources Wales. The Council's Active Travel Plan also addressed the provision of cycle routes as part of route connectivity between communities.

The Transport Strategy and Infrastructure Manager confirmed the Council would be Liaising with Natural Resources Wales and other interested parties on the cycling infrastructure throughout the county. He also advised on a requirement of the Active Travel Plan for the Council to produce an Integrated Network Travel Map, which had been submitted to the Welsh Government for its consideration. As part of that Map, proposals were being considered for the linking of existing paths/cycle ways and the possible introduction of new shared paths linking Ammanford with Cross Hands, which could include utilising former railway lines.

The Head of Transport and Engineering confirmed the Welsh Government invited local authorities to submit funding bids under the auspices of the Active Travel (Wales) Act 2013 for schemes within their Integrated Network Plans. For 2019/20 the Welsh Government had made available £23m for local authorities to bid for, with the proviso any allocated funds were spent during the financial year. It was to be also noted the Welsh Government may release additional funds during the year.

- Reference was made to the provision of catering by Leisure Services at its many outlets e.g. leisure centres/ theatres and to whether the service was embracing the ethos of sustainability and healthy eating by reducing single use plastics and reducing sugary food and drink.

The Head of Leisure confirmed the Department had adopted a set of principles to promote sustainability and healthy eating which included environmentally friendly and locally sourced products.

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that the Communities Departmental Draft Business Plan 2019/20 – 2022 be received.

6. CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S DEPARTMENTAL BUSINESS PLAN 2019/2022

The Committee considered the report on the Chief Executive's Departmental Business Plan 2018/19 – 2021 in relation to those services falling within its remit i.e. Economic Development and Property and Major Projects.

The following questions/issues were raised on the report:

- The Property and Major Projects Manager confirmed all of the properties acquired and refurbished by the Council within Llanelli Town Centre were tenanted, with some being occupied by former market tenants who had upgraded to shop units.

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that the Chief Executive's Departmental Business Plan 2019/2022 be received

7. ENVIRONMENT DEPARTMENTAL BUSINESS PLAN 2019/20 - 2022

The Committee considered the report on the Environment Departmental Business Plan 2019/20 – 2022 in relation to those services falling within its remit i.e. Planning Services and outlining the priorities for the department over the Plan's time frame.

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that the Environment Departmental Business Plan 2019/20 – 2022 be received.

8. CARMARTHENSHIRE HIGHWAY DESIGN GUIDE

The Committee considered a proposed new Carmarthenshire Highways Design Guide as a replacement to the existing guide adopted in 1997. It was noted the new guide incorporated numerous local and national policy changes, new design templates, as set out in the Manual for Streets and Manual for Streets 2 publication. It detailed the Authority's expectations for the design of highways infrastructure for developments in the County and was intended to provide guidance to developers, designers and other professionals in preparing transport infrastructure and associated interventions relating to a wide range of developments in Carmarthenshire. It had also been designed to support development by ensuring the planning process was as smooth, transparent, consistent and accurate as possible by providing details of the Council's requirements in terms of all aspects of potential highways impacts, highways design and the application of appropriate local and national policy guidance.

The following questions/issues were raised on the report.

- The Head of Planning confirmed the Guide would be implemented immediately following its adoption by the Council. Thereafter, it was intended to be progressed as Supplementary Planning Guidance commencing with a consultation in spring 2019 with adoption in the autumn of 2019 for subsequent inclusion within the revised Local Development Plan 2018-2033.
- As part of the discussion on the guide a number of references were made outside of its remit to which the Committee was advised that:
 - In relation to un-adopted roads within the county, there was no legislative requirement on developers to construct roads to adoption standard or to request their adoption by the Local Highway Authority. Whilst it was accepted un-adopted highways caused difficulties for homeowners, it was a civil matter for them, and their solicitors to address. It was also noted that the matter fell within the remit of the Environmental and Public Protection Scrutiny which had agreed to write to the local Assembly Members to request the Welsh Government to examine the issue of un-adopted roads and to introduce legislation to protect home owners;
 - In relation to the provision of public transport, and a recent announcement by a bus provider to withdraw from its contract to provide services in the county, it was confirmed the Authority had invited tenders for the service, responses to which were awaited. It was noted that whilst it was difficult to provide bus services in the rural areas for a number of reasons e.g. travel time, frequency, car ownership and the level of resources available to subsidise rural bus routes, the authority was pro-active in its approach to the provision of bus routes

and did submit grant bids wherever possible, for example the Bwc-a-Bus project;

- In relation to the provision of electric vehicle hook up points, a bid had been submitted with the Carmarthenshire Energy Partnership for the employment of an electric vehicle co-ordinator to prepare a strategy for their provision throughout the County, in association with public and private sector partners. That was currently in draft form, and would be published in the New Year. Funding had recently been obtained for their provision in Carmarthen and Newcastle Emlyn and shortly Llandovery. A further grant application was also being prepared for submission to the Welsh Government to fund their installation in Council Car parks.

9. FORTHCOMING ITEMS

The Committee received a list of forthcoming items to be considered at its next meeting to be held on the 23rd January 2019.

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that the list of forthcoming items for the meeting of the Committee to be held on the 23rd January 2019 be received.

CHAIR

DATE