

COMMUNITY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Wednesday, 23 January 2019

PRESENT: Councillor S.L. Davies (Chair)

Councillors:

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

Also in attendance:

Councillor E. Dole, Leader of the Council
Councillor L.D. Evans, Executive Board Member for Housing
Councillor D.M. Jenkins, Executive Board Member for Resources

The following Officers were in attendance:

C. Moore, Director of Corporate Services
J. Morgan, Director of Community Services
W. Walters, Director of Regeneration & Policy
I. Jones, Head of Leisure
J. Morgan, Acting Head of Homes & Safer Communities
L. Quelch, Head of Planning
L.R. Jones, Head of Administration and Law
A Bowen, Investing in Homes Lead
S Burford, Project Manager
L. James, Partnership and Engagement Manager
H. Morgan, Economic Development Manager
S. Walters, Economic Development Manager
S. Williams, Senior Accountant
M.S. Davies, Democratic Services Officer

Chamber, County Hall, Carmarthen:10.00 am - 12.20 pm

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors D. Cundy and H. Shepardson.

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

Councillor	Minute Number	Nature of Interest
S. Davies	4 – Update – Llanelli Life Science and Well-Being Village;	Employed by NHS;
J. Edmunds	5 – Housing Revenue Account Budget and housing rent setting for 2018/19;	He is private landlord;
A. Vaughan Owen	7 – Revenue and Capital Budget Monitoring Report 2018/19;	Licence holder for Gwendraeth Sports Hall.

3. PUBLIC QUESTIONS

No public questions had been received.

4. LLANELLI LIFE SCIENCE AND WELL-BEING VILLAGE - UPDATE

With reference to the Chief Executive's position statement on the Llanelli Well-Being Village to Council on the 12th December 2018 [Minute 3 thereof refers] the Committee considered a report which aimed to provide further assurance on the governance of the Village Project both during the procurement process and following the signing of the Collaboration Agreement with Swansea University and Sterling Health Security Holdings Limited. The report included:

- Progress of the City Deal Business Case;
- The status of four reviews which had commenced and the delivery of the Village project;
- Assurances, through legal review, that a robust procurement process had been undertaken;
- Assurance around the governance of the project;
- Termination of the Collaboration Agreement.

The Committee was advised that the findings of the four reviews would be shared once completed. In addition, whilst the Collaboration Agreement had been terminated, a working relationship with Swansea University was required, and continued, to ensure that the optimal benefits could be achieved. Project progress continued to be maintained with the aim of completing phase one of the Village in 2021.

The following issues were raised on the report:

- In response to a question it was emphasised that the Wales Audit Review was being undertaken at the *Council's* request;
- It was noted that following the recent granting of planning permission for the Wellness and Life Science Development the value of the land had increased and therefore the Authority's investment to date was secure;
- Concern was expressed that the estimated 700 undergraduate places likely to be in place by 2020 in related fields might be jeopardised should Swansea University reconsider its involvement in the scheme. The Committee was advised that officers hoped that Swansea University's role in the project would continue. The Authority would, however, be prepared to discuss alternative project delivery should Swansea University reconsider its position;
- Members were reassured that there was no flooding risk associated with the site;
- The Director of Corporate Services commented that a number of financial institutions had expressed interest in the project and these would be followed up once the independent review of the Business Case had been concluded and published;
- The Committee was reminded of the leisure and assisted living components included in the project for which provision had been made in the capital programme;
- The Director of Regeneration and Policy, in response to a comment, spoke

of the possible benefits of what was considered to be a project of national importance to the whole of Carmarthenshire and beyond.

Officers were thanked for the comprehensive update.

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that the report be received.

5. HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT BUDGET AND HOUSING RENT SETTING FOR 2019/20

[NOTE: Councillor J. Edmunds had previously declared an interest in this item.]

The Committee considered, as part of the budget consultation process, a report prepared by the Director of Corporate Services, in conjunction with officers from the Communities Department, which brought together the latest proposals for the Revenue and Capital Budgets for the Housing Revenue Account 2019/2020. The report would be presented to the Executive Board on the 4th February 2019.

Whilst the County Council had approved the implementation of the Social Housing Rents Policy in 2015, providing consistency for 5 years, this had ended in 2018/19. Welsh Government had, however, provided an interim policy for 2019/20 pending the results of the Affordable Housing Supply Review. This should result in the development of a new policy due for implementation in 2020/21. The interim policy allowed local authorities within their target rent band to increase rent by CPI only (the County Council was currently marginally within the target rent band). The increase in target rent for 2019/20 had been notified as 2.4%. The ability to progress rents for those properties below the target rent, a maximum of £2 per week increase until the target rent was reached, had been removed, unless current average rent was below the target rent band.

In response to a comment regarding the need to help people avoid getting into debt the Acting Head of Homes and Safer Communities referred to the development of a pre-tenancy service so that tenancies could be better managed. Members were assured that every effort was made to maintain a tenancy and the eviction rate had reduced considerably

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that the report and the following proposals be endorsed for submission to the Executive Board:-

5.1 To increase the average housing rent as per the WG Interim Social Housing Rents Policy:

- **Properties at target rents to increase by 2.4%;**
- **Those rents above target be frozen until such time that they meet the target;**

thereby producing an increase on the average housing rent of 2.4% or £2.05 which will produce a sustainable Business Plan, maintain CHS+ and resource the Affordable Homes programme as supported by the CHS+ Steering Group;

5.2 To maintain garage rents at £9.00 per week and garage bases at £2.25 per week;

5.3 To apply the service charge policy to ensure tenants who receive the benefit from specific services pay for those services;

5.4 To increase charges for using our sewerage treatment works in line with rent increases.

6. THE CARMARTHENSHIRE HOMES STANDARD PLUS (CHS+) BUSINESS PLAN 2019-2022

The Committee received for consideration the Carmarthenshire Homes Standards Plus (CHS+) Business Plan 2018-21 the purpose of which was threefold. Firstly, it explained the vision and detail of the CHS+ over the next three years and what it meant for tenants. Secondly, it confirmed the financial profile, based on current assumptions for delivery of the CHS+ over the next three years and, thirdly, produced a business plan for the annual application to the Welsh Government for Major Repairs Allowance (MRA) for 2018/19 equating to £6.1m.

The following questions/issues were raised on the report:

- The Acting Head of Homes and Safer Communities, in response to a comment, advised that the number of void properties should reduce over the next 6-12 months;
- It was commented that the purchasers of affordable homes to be made more aware of the conditions

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED THAT IT BE RECOMMENDED TO THE EXECUTIVE BOARD THAT:

- **the vision of the CHS+ and the financial delivery programme over the next three years be confirmed;**
- **the submission of the plan to the Welsh Government be confirmed.**

7. REVENUE AND CAPITAL BUDGET MONITORING REPORT 2018/19

[NOTE: Councillor A. Vaughan Owen had previously declared an interest in this item.]

The Committee considered the 2018/19 Revenue and Capital Budget Monitoring reports for the Housing, Regeneration, Planning and Leisure and Recreation Services for the period up to the 31st October, 2018. It was noted that the revenue budget showed a net variance of £243k and the HRA Housing Service showed a £269k variance against the 2018/19 approved budgets. The capital programme showed a variance of -£1,580k against the 2018/19 approved budget.

The Head of Leisure, in response to reiterated concerns over the operating deficit for the St Clears Leisure Centre, again advised that the department was developing an options appraisal for the centre with a view to increasing revenue/participation rates though the facility was in need of significant investment.

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that the Revenue and Capital Budget Monitoring Report be received.

8. OUR APPROACH TO TENANT INVOLVEMENT.

The Committee considered a report outlining the development of a fresh approach to involving tenants in challenging the way the Authority delivered services and

making it easier for them to become involved. To assist in developing the new tenant participation plan TPAS [Tenant Participation Advisory Service] Cymru had been commissioned to carry out a fundamental review of tenant participation and resident engagement. The review had looked at the Authority's existing approach and challenged whether existing plans were in line with best practice and if participation activities had been successful in encouraging tenants to become involved. As part of the review TPAS had been asked to consult and seek tenant's views and to suggest areas the Authority needed to focus on.

The Committee was advised that communication with tenants would always be in their preferred format whether digital or printed.

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND TO EXECUTIVE BOARD that the Tenant Involvement Plan be approved.

9. EXPLANATION FOR NON-SUBMISSION OF SCRUTINY REPORTS

The Committee considered the explanations provided for the non-submission of three scrutiny reports.

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that the non-submission report be received.

10. FORTHCOMING ITEMS

The Committee received a list of forthcoming items to be considered at its next meeting to be held on the 14th February 2019.

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that the list of forthcoming items for the meeting of the Committee to be held on the 14th February 2019 be received.

11. MINUTES

11.1. 23RD NOVEMBER, 2018

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on the 23rd November, 2018 be signed as a correct record.

11.2. 13TH DECEMBER, 2018

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on the 13th December, 2018 be signed as a correct record.

CHAIR

DATE