

ENVIRONMENTAL & PUBLIC PROTECTION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Friday, 5 July 2019

PRESENT: Councillor J.D. James* (Chair)

Councillors:

J.M. Charles, T.A.J. Davies, J.A. Davies, K. Davies, P.M. Edwards, S.J.G. Gilasbey, T.M. Higgins, E. Morgan, B.D.J. Phillips, J.S. Phillips, A.D.T. Speake, D. Thomas and A. Vaughan Owen*

[NOTE: Cllr. A. Vaughan Owen chaired the meeting from 10.15am until its conclusion.]

Also in attendance:

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

The following Officers were in attendance:

J. Morgan, Head of Homes & Safer Communities;
S. Pilliner, Head of Transportation & Highways;
S Charles, Transport Strategy and Infrastructure Manager;
R. James, Group Accountant;
I. Macho, Biodiversity Officer;
K. Harrop, Community Safety Manager;
R James, Performance Planning & Business Officer;
M.S. Davies, Democratic Services Officer.

Chamber, County Hall, Carmarthen: 10.00 am - 12.00 pm

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies for absence.

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

There were no declarations of interest.

3. PUBLIC QUESTIONS

The Chair advised that no public questions had been received.

4. DRAFT - CARMARTHENSHIRE COUNCIL ANNUAL REPORT 2018/19

The Committee considered the Council's Draft Annual Report for 2018/19 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 2018/19 performance;
- 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;

Other performance information would be included as results became available.

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

- Reference was made to the large increase in the percentage of declined measures compared to previous years and it was queried as to whether all the measures were actually relevant. In response the Committee was reminded that the measures were set at national level;
- In regard to the monitoring of air quality it was queried as to how such a measure could become classed as an 'improvement' when the Authority was legally bound to undertake 'constant' monitoring. The Head of Transportation and Highways responded that where air quality monitoring identified a problem an action plan would be drawn up to address the issues;

[NOTE: *At this point Cllr. J. James left the meeting and Cllr. A. Vaughan Owen took the chair.*]

- Reference was made to Well Being Objective 9 [Live Well/Age Well] and disappointment was expressed over the fact that the Sense of Community survey results had declined by 26% in spite of the positive progress made over most of the Authority's commitments;
- In regard to Well Being Objective 12 [Healthy and Safe Environment] the Head of Transportation and Highways agreed to ascertain the reason why there had been a delay in sowing seeds and planting out flowers in some areas where beds had been prepared;
- The progress made in terms of renewable energy was welcomed though the lack of a target was highlighted;
- Arising from Well Being Objective 13 [Healthy and Safe Environment] and in response to a query regarding charging units for electric vehicles the Head of Transportation and Highways confirmed that the funding bid to install 26 new 'fast' charging units had been successful and tenders had been invited;
- In response to a concern over the increased percentage of roads in a poor condition the Head of Transportation and Highways responded that in spite of an injection of funding from Welsh Government for the next two years there would still be a large backlog in the maintenance programme and the situation would remain a challenging one until there was a more major injection of funding.

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND TO EXECUTIVE BOARD that the Draft Carmarthenshire County Council's Annual Report for 2018/19 be endorsed.

5. REVENUE & CAPITAL BUDGET MONITORING REPORT

The Committee received for consideration the budget monitoring reports for the Environment Service, Public Protection Service and the Community Safety Service as at 31st March 2019 in respect of the 2018/19 financial year.

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

- In response to a query regarding the income target for car parks the Committee was informed that this was due to be removed from the monitoring report following previously expressed concerns as it was unachievable whilst car parking charges were not increased;
- In terms of County farms it was noted that the Authority had reduced its contributions;

- Officers agreed to ascertain the current situation regarding the leases of the Livestock markets and the bad debt provision.

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that the report be received.

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

Further to minute 9 of the meeting held on the 29th June 2018 the Committee considered an update report on progress in delivering Carmarthenshire County Council's Environment Act Forward Plan which had been published in March 2017.

The report detailed how progress had been delivered within the 29 actions set out in the Council's Environment Act Forward Plan 2017. All actions were on target, with some completed.

The following issues were raised on the report:-

- In response to a comment regarding the absence of any reference in the Forward Plan to Ash die-back which was an air-borne disease the committee was informed that officers had recently attended a seminar on the matter at the National Botanical Gardens and trees on public highways and authority owned land would be closely monitored. A Departmental working group had also been established which would develop a campaign to advise landowners;
- In response to a comment that although some actions were on target the target dates had been revised to a later date members were informed that it was acknowledged that some of the targets may have been initially over ambitious and the new timescales were considered to be more realistic following meetings with other divisions and departments;
- Concern was expressed that there was no reference in the Plan to the eradication of Japanese Knotweed. Members were advised that the Authority had a duty to treat Knotweed on its property but on private land it was the owner's responsibility. The Authority had received funding from Welsh Government to assist with the control of invasive species. The Head of Homes and Safer Communities agreed to ascertain from the Legal section as to whether the recent Network Rail case regarding Japanese Knotweed had any implications for the Authority.

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

7. STORM CALLUM SECTION 19 FLOOD REPORT

The Committee considered a report, due to be considered by the Executive Board also, detailing 55 recommendations formulated as a result of investigations undertaken by Carmarthenshire County Council (CCC) as Lead Local Flood Authority (LLFA) in response to the flooding that had occurred across Carmarthenshire on the 12-14th October 2018 as a result of Storm Callum. Whilst the report did not provide firm recommendations and conclusions in relation to the implementation of capital works that may be appropriate in terms of flood alleviation in future, it detailed a series of actions that would inform the debate about the feasibility and viability of future flood alleviation capital works where appropriate. Furthermore, the report established the need to map out and set out

maintenance responsibilities and arrangements for drainage infrastructure assets in future. It was emphasised that communication with members of affected electoral wards had been, and would continue to be, undertaken in connection with the recommendations.

The Chair paid tribute to the memory of Corey Sharpling, who had lost his life during Storm Callum in the tragedy in Cwmdud and thanked the council workers who had recently received awards for their actions on the day.

The committee welcomed the recommendations and the importance of involving local members in discussions regarding flood alleviation work was emphasised.

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that the recommendations/actions set out in the report be endorsed.

8. ACTIVE TRAVEL ACT UPDATE

The Committee considered a report which provided an update on activities undertaken by Carmarthenshire County Council in fulfilment of its duties under the Active Travel (Wales) Act 2013. In addition to the delivery of new walking and cycling schemes the authority had included Active Travel facilities as an element of larger Highways developments. The authority also upheld the principles of the Act in its planning function, ensuring that the needs of walkers and cyclists were considered in permissive development, as outlined in the Highways Design Guide. Whilst, however, Welsh Government had recently increased the level of capital funding available across Wales it was considered that there was evidence of a significant shift to awarding funding to urban settlements and this had been reflected in the recently announced response to the Authority's Active Travel Fund Bid 2019/20. Of concern was the negative impact this would have on more rural authorities such as Carmarthenshire which in turn would have a major impact on the Twyi Valley Path. Members were informed that officers, together with the Leader and the Executive Board Member for Environment, had recently met with the Deputy Minister for Economy and Transport, Lee Waters AM, to discuss how the Authority could ensure that it received the necessary level of funding to ensure that Carmarthenshire could fulfil its ambition of becoming the cycling hub of Wales. He had not been of the opinion, however, that leisure cycling could be categorised as 'active travel'.

The following issues were raised on the report:-

- In response to a query it was stated that there had been positive feedback from the cycle forum steering group in regard to the Authority's development of the cycling infrastructure;
- Members were advised, in response to funding concerns, that whilst the Abergwili to Whitemill section of the Towy Valley Path had been completed land ownership issues remained over other parts of the proposed route which were being progressed in line with the Authority's commitment to complete the scheme;
- Disappointment was expressed with the Deputy Minister for Economy and Transport's view as to what constituted 'active travel' and the outcome of the Active Travel Fund Bid and it was suggested, particularly as the Deputy Minister was a Carmarthenshire AM, that the Committee's disappointment be conveyed to him in a letter. Members were assured that the Authority would continue to develop active travel opportunities;

- The Head of Highways and Transportation, in response to a query, gave an update on Phase 2 of the Ammanford to Cross Hands Masterplan which would eventually see a link established with the Millennium Coastal Path, Llanelli;
- Highways staff were thanked for all their work in preparing the routes for the two major cycling races which had recently visited Carmarthenshire;
- The Transport Strategy & Infrastructure Manager agreed to ascertain take up on the cycle to work scheme.

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED

8.1 that the report be received;

8.2 that the Chair liaise with the Executive Board Member for Environment to compose a letter to the Deputy Minister for Economy and Transport along the lines referred to above.

**9. ENVIRONMENTAL & PUBLIC PROTECTION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
ACTIONS UPDATE REPORT**

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that the report detailing progress in relation to actions, requests or referrals emerging from previous scrutiny meetings, be noted.

10. FORTHCOMING ITEMS

RESOLVED that the list of forthcoming items for the Committee meeting to be held on the 30th September 2019 be agreed.

11. MINUTES

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that the minutes of the meetings of the Environment and Public Protection Scrutiny Committee held on the 17th May, 2019 and 10th June, 2019 be signed as correct records.

12. MINUTES OF THE JOINT MEETING OF THE ENVIRONMENTAL & PUBLIC PROTECTION AND SOCIAL CARE & HEALTH SCRUTINY COMMITTEES, HELD ON THE 10TH JUNE 2019

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that the minutes of the joint meeting of the Environmental & Public Protection and Social Care & Health Scrutiny Committees, held on the 10th June 2019, be received.

CHAIR

DATE