

PLACE, SUSTAINABILITY & CLIMATE CHANGE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

14 APRIL 2023

PRESENT: Councillor J.D. James (Chair)

Councillors (In Person):

K. Davies S.M. Allen N. Lewis B.D.J. Phillips

Councillors (Virtually):

T.A.J. Davies D.C. Evans T.M. Higgins G.R. Jones
G.B. Thomas

Also in attendance (In Person):

Councillor A. Vaughan Owen, Cabinet Member for Climate Change, Decarbonisation and Sustainability;

Councillor E. Thomas, Cabinet Member for Transport, Waste and Infrastructure Services;

Councillor A. Lenny, Cabinet Member for Resources.

Also Present (In Person):

R. Griffiths, Head of Place and Sustainability;
J. Morgan, Head of Housing and Public Protection;
S. Pilliner, Head of Transportation & Highways;
J. Edwards, Business Improvement Manager;
J. Jones, Property Maintenance Manager;
R. James, Group Accountant;
R. Morris, Members Support Officer;
L. Davies, Simultaneous Translator;
J. Owen, Democratic Services Officer.

Also Present (Virtually):

G. Ayers, Corporate Policy and Partnership Manager;
D.W. John, Interim Head of Waste;
S. Hendy, Member Support Officer.

Chamber, County Hall, Carmarthen, SA31 1JP and remotely: 10:00am - 11:10am

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies received.

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

There were no declarations of any prohibited party whips.
There were no declarations of interest made.

3. PUBLIC QUESTIONS (NONE RECEIVED)

The Chair advised that no public questions had been received.

4. REVENUE & CAPITAL BUDGET MONITORING REPORT 2022/23

Presented by the Cabinet Member for Resources, the Committee considered the financial monitoring report on the 2022/23 Revenue and Capital Budget for the Place & Infrastructure and Public Protection Services for the period up to the 31st December, 2022.

It was reported that overall, the revenue budget was forecasting a £593k overspend to year end. The capital budget reported a forecasted net spend of £15,263k compared with a working net budget of £19,105k giving a variance of -£3,824k.

The Committee noted that in regard to the savings report, the expectation was that at year end, £694k of Managerial savings against target of £824k was forecasted to be delivered. In addition, £20k of Policy savings against a target of £20k was put forward for 2022/23 and was forecasted to be delivered.

The following questions/issues were raised on the report:

- In terms of improving the environment, reference was made to Appendix B where concern was raised that the ongoing financial pressure could put the journey to become net zero carbon in jeopardy. The Cabinet Member for Resources stated that it the Local Authority would continuously strive to meet the required targets.
- Reference was made to Appendix B to the report – Highways and Transportation. In respect of the matter of school crossing patrols which reported that ‘several posts had become vacant and would not be refilled’, it was asked if this was the policy and if so, would pedestrian crossings be put in place? The Cabinet Member for Resources stated that it was policy to retire school crossing staff in places where electronic provision was in available. In places where suitable provisions were not available school crossing staff would remain.
- Reference was made to Appendix E to the report, Ammanford Highway Infrastructure which reported that a ‘Corporate decision was required given WG roads review’, an explanation was sought. The Head of Highways and Transportation explained that further consideration would be required following the recent Welsh Governments Roads Review. The outcomes of the review consisted of new policy criteria which would have an implication on all future road schemes.

- Reference was made to Appendix B to the report – Waste and Environmental Services. In terms of the underspend attributed to Environmental Enforcement it was asked when would this be assessed, and the outcome reported? The Interim Head of Waste reported that the Committee’s Task and Finish Group were considering these elements within its review on the Management of Fly-tipping in Carmarthenshire. The underspend was attributed to the departure of staff, where interim arrangements have been put in place. It was reported that following consideration of the departmental structure, the recommendations of the Task and Finish review and budgetary constraints the timescale would likely be up to 6months.
- Reference was made to Appendix E – Property. In terms of the Schools Handyvan Service which reported that ‘more work being identified within schools which require to be undertaken’, concerns were raised in regard to the older schools within the County that the overspend could continue to escalate. The Property Maintenance Manager explained that the work of the Handyvan was to predominantly carry out required health and safety work. As part of the service, planned maintenance requirements were being identified which would be prioritised within the available budget. In addition, stock condition surveys were currently being undertaken across the entire corporate stock which would provide a wider overview of the financial requirements.

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that the Revenue and Capital Budget Monitoring Report up to 31st December 2022 be received.

5. ROUNDABOUT SPONSORSHIP SCHEME

Presented by the Cabinet Member for Transport, Waste and Infrastructure Services, the Committee considered a report on the new Roundabout Sponsorship Scheme.

It was reported that the new Roundabout Sponsorship Scheme would involve businesses being able to sponsor a roundabout within the County, having their company being promoted in a potentially highly visible location without incurring costs to the Council.

The report provided information outlining how the scheme would work in practice taking account of any potential legal issues. As well as how relevant safety criteria could be established to mitigate any potential risk to road users and potentially to the Council.

The following questions/issues were raised on the report:

- A query was raised if the scheme was open to enquires from business’ outside of the County? The Cabinet Member stated that stated that each request would be considered on its own merit. In response to a further question, the Business Improvement Manager explained that a small working group which comprised of departments including Marketing and Media, Planning and Highways which would consider the range of requests and

specifications using a prioritising matrix. In addition, it was reported that a roundabout could include more than one sponsor.

- It was commented that whilst new sponsorship scheme was welcomed, it was hoped that roundabouts would remain free of signage as there was a risk of having too many signs. It was suggested that this could be achieved by businesses sponsoring sculptures on roundabouts instead of using many overpowering signs.
- In response to a query regarding how the competition between local businesses and multi-national businesses would be managed, the Business Improvement Manager stated that the prioritisation matrix would favour local businesses and that the weighting of the matrix would be monitored.
- It was asked if local smaller businesses could receive a better cost. The Business Improvement Manager explained that as this was a mutual benefit scheme the prices offered were good value particularly given the current climate.

RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND TO CABINET that the Roundabout Sponsorship Scheme be approved.

6. CARMARTHENSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL - CORPORATE STRATEGY 2022-27

Presented by Cabinet Member for Climate Change, Decarbonisation and Sustainability, the Committee received the Council's Corporate Strategy 2022-27 for consideration.

The Council's Corporate Strategy, included the Council's well-being objectives, sets the direction of travel and priorities for the organisation over the period of the current administration. The Strategy provided the framework for delivering on the Cabinet's vision and commitments during that period. The new strategy would focus on a smaller number of population-based objectives whilst identifying the thematic priorities, service priorities and core business enablers that the Council would aim to progress during that period.

The following questions/issues were raised on the report:

- The Chair reported that in accordance with the Committee's Forward Work Plan and the Non-submission report agreed at the Committee meeting on 23rd January 2023, the Corporate Strategy had already been endorsed by full Council at its meeting on 1st March 2023. In light of this, the Corporate Strategy remained an item on the Committee's agenda, providing Scrutiny Committee Members with an opportunity to scrutinise with an understanding that the plan had already been endorsed.

In noting that the Corporate Strategy had already been endorsed prior to the Committee's receiving for Scrutiny, it was proposed that future Corporate Strategy's be provided to the Committee in a timely manner in order that the members can properly scrutinise the contents of the Strategy before it has been ratified by full Council. This was duly seconded.

In acknowledging that the Strategy had already been endorsed, the Cabinet Member highlighted that all Elected Members were invited to attend a consultation session held on 27 January 2023 which provided an opportunity for Members to provide feedback on the Corporate Strategy as well as Cabinet held on 13th February 2023 and full Council on 1st March 2023.

No questions were raised on the content of the Corporate Strategy.

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that the Committee receive the Corporate Strategy for public scrutiny in a timely manner prior to being endorsed by full Council.

7. DRAFT DIVISIONAL DELIVERY PLANS 2023-24

The Committee received for consideration Draft Divisional Service Delivery Plans relevant to the divisions within the Place, Sustainability and Climate Change directorate for 2023/24 as follows:

- Highways and Transportation Division – Appendix 1 to the report
- Waste and Environmental Division - Appendix 2 to the report
- Property design and Maintenance Division - Appendix 3 to the report
- Place Sustainability Division - Appendix 4 to the report
- Service Improvement and Transformation Division - Appendix 5 to the report

The Draft Divisional Service Delivery Plans set out the strategic actions and measures to be implemented within each Division in order for the Council to progress with its well-being objectives, thematic priorities and service priorities.

The issues/observations raised by the Committee were addressed by each Draft Divisional Plan as follows:-

Divisional Delivery Plan - Highways and Transportation [Appendix 1 to the report]

- Reference was made to the Action and Measure within the Highways Asset Management section - ‘withdrawal of Welsh Government funding, explore all possible funding options to support a programme of improving the condition of rural roads.’ It was asked what funding options were being considered? The Cabinet Member for Transport, Waste and Infrastructure Services stated that Carmarthenshire has the second largest road network in Wales which comprises mainly of B, C and unclassified roads which were in a poor state of repair with a significant backlog. It was emphasised that alternative funding methods must be sought.

The Cabinet Member for Resources added that this matter was as a result of the UK Government Austerity Project but when budget cuts were commenced in 2010, the highway road network were the first to be targeted. As a result, the conditions of the road network have deteriorated with a shortfall of £45m which is what is needed to maintain the roads. It was highlighted that this extends outside of Carmarthenshire.

In terms of future funding, the Head of Highways and Transportation reported that funding had been achieved by placing bids to access Welsh Government funding in order to repair roads that suffered from storm damage. In addition, bids to access funding for road refurbishment and resilient roads had been made. Members were assured that as soon as grant funding opportunities were presented, bids would be submitted to achieve the funding in order to improve the road network.

- In recognising the heavy workload of the highways department, praise and gratitude was extended to the highways team for their swift response to reports of hazardous road conditions.
- In response to a query raised in respect of the 'source reference' within the plan, the Cabinet Member explained that the plans were new in design to better align with the Corporate Strategy and Well-being objectives and Cabinet's vision.
- Reference was made to the Action and Measure within the Planning & Infrastructure section – *'Review the current vehicle fleet strategy with a view to utilising the most suitable and low emissions vehicle technology (including electric or other power sources) over the coming years.'* In terms of setting targets, it was requested that a suitable ambition be set. It was suggested that in terms of setting targets, many sources of outside expertise were available to be accessed which could prove to be cost effective. The Cabinet Member for Climate Change, Decarbonisation and Sustainability welcomed the enthusiasm and suggested that the Committee, in developing its Forward Work Plan could request information to monitor the development and pace of the work on this subject.

Divisional Delivery Plan - Waste and Environmental Division
[Appendix 2 to the report]

- No issues/observations were raised by the Committee.

Divisional Delivery Plan – Property design and Maintenance Division
[Appendix 3 to the report]

- No issues/observations were raised by the Committee.

Divisional Delivery Plan – Place Sustainability Division
[Appendix 4 to the report]

- No issues/observations were raised by the Committee.

Divisional Delivery Plan – Service Improvement and Transformation Division
[Appendix 5 to the report]

- No issues/observations were raised by the Committee.

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that the Draft Divisional Plans for 2023/24 be received.

8. DRAFT DIVISIONAL DELIVERY PLAN 2023-24 FOR HOUSING & PUBLIC PROTECTION

The Committee received for consideration the 2023-24 Draft Divisional Service Delivery Plan for the Housing and Public Protection relevant to the Place, Sustainability and Climate Change directorate. The plan detailed the strategic actions and measures to be taken forward to enable the Council to make progress against its Well-Being Objectives, thematic priorities and service priorities.

In presenting the report, the Cabinet Member for Climate Change, Decarbonisation and Sustainability welcomed issues/queries in relation to the Public Protection element of the divisional plan as the remit of this scrutiny.

There were no issues/observations raised by the Committee.

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that the Draft Divisional Plans for Housing and Public Protection 2023/24 be received.

9. EXPLANATION FOR NON-SUBMISSION OF SCRUTINY REPORTS

The Committee received an explanation for the non-submission of the scrutiny report pertaining to the Delivery Plan for Community Safety/Crime and Disorder. The revised submission date being 30th June 2023.

RESOLVED that the explanation for the non-submission be noted.

10. FORTHCOMING ITEMS

The Committee reviewed the list of forthcoming items to be considered at its next meeting to be held on 15th May 2023, which had been derived from the Committee's Forward Work Plan 2022/23. The Chair emphasised that the Forward Work Plan was a flexible document that could be updated as required throughout the year as new information emerges.

The Chair reported that the following reports would be presented to the Committee at its next meeting on 15th May 2023:-

- The Task and Finish Group Report on the Management of Fly-tipping in Carmarthenshire, as the report was currently being finalised.
- The Cwm Environmental Business Plan 2022-23, due to personal circumstances of the representative from Cwm Environmental.

RESOLVED that the list of forthcoming items to be considered at the next scheduled meeting on 15th May 2023 be noted.

11. TO SIGN AS A CORRECT RECORD THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE COMMITTEE HELD ON THE 24TH FEBRUARY 2023

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on the 24th February, 2023 be signed as a correct record.

CHAIR

DATE