

COMMUNITIES, HOMES & REGENERATION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

WEDNESDAY, 15 NOVEMBER 2023

PRESENT: Councillor D.M. Cundy (Chair)

Councillors (In Person):

B.W. Jones J.K. Howell H.B. Shepardson M. Thomas

Councillors (Virtually):

W.R.A. Davies T. Davies A. Evans R.E. Evans
H.L. Davies M. Palfreman R. Sparks

Also in attendance (In Person):

Councillor L.D. Evans – Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Housing
Councillor A. Lenny – Cabinet Member for Resources

Also in attendance (Virtually):

Councillor H.A.L. Evans – Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Leisure, Culture and Tourism

Also Present (In Person):

J. Jones, Head of Regeneration, Policy & Digital
J. Fearn, Head of Housing Property and Strategic Projects
I. Jones, Head of Leisure
H. Morgan, Economic Development Manager
D. Hall-Jones, Member Support Officer
R. Morris, Members Support Officer
S. Rees, Simultaneous Translator
K. Thomas, Democratic Services Officer

Also Present (Virtually):

J. Morgan, Head of Housing and Public Protection
M. Runeckles, Members Support Officer

Chamber - County Hall, Carmarthen. SA31 1JP and remotely - 10.00 - 10.55 am

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE.

An apology for absence was received from Councillor B. Davies.

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

Councillor	Minute No (s)	Nature of Interest
R. Sparks	4 – Shared Prosperity Fund Update	Recipient of a grant under the scheme

Note: These minutes are subject to confirmation at the next meeting.

R. Sparks	5 – Update on the Arfor 2 Programme	Recipient of a grant under the scheme
R. Sparks	6 – Revenue and Capital Budget Monitoring Report 2023/24	Has a swimming business and has dispensation from the Standards Committee to speak and make written representations but not vote

There were no declarations of prohibited party whips.

3. PUBLIC QUESTIONS (NONE RECEIVED)

The Chair advised that no public questions had been received.

4. SHARED PROSPERITY FUND UPDATE

(NOTE: Councillor R. Sparks having earlier declared an interest in this item left the meeting during its consideration by the Committee).

The Committee, in accordance with a request made at its Forward Planning Session in April 2023 received an update report on the progress of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (SPF) in Carmarthenshire detailing:

- Governance and Local Decision Making
- Programme Management Team
- Implementation and Delivery
- Financial Claiming and Monitoring

The Committee noted that subsequent to approval of the Regional Investment Plan in December 2022, Carmarthenshire's £38.6m allocation from the fund had been unlocked and that in order for the Council to meet the tight deadlines set by the UK Government of the 31st March 2025, the development of the SPF in the County had progressed at pace. To date, since the scheme's launch on the 6th March 2023 a total of £19.68m Anchor and Strategic projects had been approved together with a further £5.5m for the Adult Numeracy Programme Multiply bringing the current total to £25.18m

The following questions / issues were raised on the report:

- In relation to a question on the process and governance of Stand-Alone Projects approved by the Council's Cabinet, it was confirmed strict criteria and guidelines were in place to ensure compliance for all grant approvals. In terms of assurance and the weighting of Council projects, a Regeneration Partnership had been established with stakeholders from a wide range of organisations. Both the Anchor and Strategic projects were considered by the Partnership prior to Cabinet approval.

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With regard to Governance, whilst the City and County of Swansea was the lead authority for the SPF, 4% of the overall fund for Carmarthenshire had been utilised to establish a Programme Management Office to monitor all projects which then fed back information on outputs against criteria to both the Cabinet and the UK Government.

- With regard to a question on the monitoring of outputs and impacts of grant awards, it was confirmed a monitoring team had been established to ensure maximum spend of grant allocations was achieved. It was further confirmed an update monitoring report on project spend, outputs and outcomes could be provided to a future meeting of the Committee.
- In response to a query on Appendix 2 and the absence of any explanation on the nature of the grant awards, it was confirmed the relevant information would be circulated to members of the committee.

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that the Shared Prosperity Fund update report be received.

5. UPDATE ON THE ARFOR 2 PROGRAMME

(NOTE: Councillor R. Sparks having earlier declared an interest in this item left the meeting during its consideration by the Committee).

The Committee, in accordance with a request made at its Forward Planning Session in April 2023 received an update report on the progress of the Arfor 2 Programme within Carmarthenshire that provided opportunities to support the economic regeneration of the County whilst contributing to the growth of the Welsh Language.

It was noted that the key strategic objectives of Arfor 2 were:-

- To create opportunities for young people and families (under 35 years old) to stay in or return to their indigenous communities – supporting them to succeed locally by engaging in enterprise or developing a career.
- To create enterprising communities within Welsh-speaking areas – by supporting commercial and community enterprises that aim to preserve and increase local wealth by taking advantage of the identity and unique qualities of their areas.
- To maximise the benefit of activity through collaboration– to ensure that good practice and lessons learnt are shared and that there is on-going monitoring to ensure continuous improvement.
- To Strengthen the identity of communities with a high density of Welsh speakers – by supporting the use and visibility of the Welsh language, encouraging a sense of place and local loyalty.

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

- With regard to the £1.18m allocation to Carmarthenshire to deliver the Cymunedua Mentrus Programme, it was confirmed each of the 4 local authorities within the programme i.e Anglesey, Gwynedd, Ceredigion and

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Carmarthenshire had received the same allocation. It was also noted funding applications could be submitted to each of the 4 authorities.

- In relation to the monitoring of the Programme, while Gwynedd County Council, as the lead authority, was responsible for its evaluation and monitoring, each of the 4 authorities provided it with monthly monitoring reports which were then submitted to both the Arfor 2 Programme Board, comprising the leaders of each authority, and the Welsh Government.

The Committee was also advised that following on from recommendations arising on the Arfor 1 Programme, highlighting monitoring and evaluation as being a key part of the programme, Wavehill had been appointed to develop a monitoring framework to be used across each of the workstreams to evidence the programme's impact.

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that the Arfor 2 programme update report be received.

6. REVENUE & CAPITAL BUDGET MONITORING REPORT 2023/24

(NOTE: Councillor R. Sparks having earlier declared an interest in this item re-declared that interest and remained in the meeting.

The Committee considered the 2023/24 Revenue and Capital Budget Monitoring reports for the Housing, Regeneration and Property, Place and Sustainability and Leisure and Recreation Services for the period up to the 31st August, 2023. It was noted that the revenue budget was forecasting a £36k overspend, the capital budget a £28,568k underspend, whilst the Housing Revenue Account was forecasting a £81k overspend.

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

- In response to a query regarding a £26k shortfall in income for Burry Port Harbour being attributed to a shortfall in car parking income, the Head of Leisure advised the reasons for the shortfall were multi-faceted. Those included the current position with the Harbour tenants having entered into administration (which had impacted on the numbers of boat owners using the harbour), the cost of upgrading the car park together with the absence of car parking enforcement. Discussions were, however, ongoing with the Highways Division on the enforcement resource within all the coastal car parks to improve parking income.
- With regard to the current position with Burry Port Harbour, following the tenants having entered into administration, the Head of Leisure advised that regular discussions were held with the administrators and it was anticipated an options report would be submitted to Cabinet in the new year on the Harbour's future operation. It was also noted that monthly stakeholder meetings were held with local members and other interested stakeholders to apprise them of the current position.
- In relation to the £78k anticipated shortfall in the operation of the Pendine Outdoor Education Centre, the Head of Leisure reported that whilst efficiency savings and remodelling of the Outdoor Education Offer had

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been previously agreed, it had become necessary for those to be slipped forward a year when it became evident the timeline of achieving a completely re-modelled service would not be achieved. However, the target income was still detailed within the budget and that had contributed towards the overspend.

With regard to usage of the centre itself, while it was still being booked by schools, the facilities were coming to the end of their operational life and, at some point, would not be safe for continued use.

- In relation to the £211k overspend on the Pendine Attractor Project, the Head of Leisure reported that was attributable to the Council's decision to not franchise its operation but to manage it in-house and the start-up costs associated with that decision. However, it was anticipated the centre would achieve a break-even position by the end of the current financial year and, thereafter, would operate at a profit.
- With regard to the £219k budget for the Llanelli Joint Venture the Head of Regeneration, Policy and Digital confirmed it was an agreement between the Council and the Welsh Government to bring forward sites within the defined Llanelli JV area for economic development and regeneration with the income from their sale being used to support regeneration e.g. current funding was being used to support the Pentre Awel project. It was also confirmed the Committee could be provided with details of sites earmarked for development over the next three years.
- The Head of Leisure in response to a question on the future of the Kidwelly Tinsplate Museum, confirmed officers were currently looking to develop a 10-15 year plan for the site.

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

7. ESTABLISHMENT OF A TASK AND FINISH GROUP ON ADAPTATIONS

The Committee, in accordance with the decision made at its meeting on the 28th September to establish a Task and Finish Group on the adaptations service within the Housing Property and Strategic Projects Division, considered a report detailing the proposed membership of the Group together with its proposed terms of reference.

It was noted the proposed membership of the Group was:

- Councillor D. Cundy (Chair - Communities, Homes, and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee)
- Councillor B. Jones (Vice Chair - Communities, Homes, and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee)
- Councillor R. Sparkes
- Councillor K. Howell
- Councillor M. Palfreman
- Councillor H. Shepardson

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that the membership and Terms of Reference of the Task and Finish Group on Adaptations be approved.

Note: These minutes are subject to confirmation at the next meeting.

8. NON-SUBMISSION OF SCRUTINY REPORT

The Committee received an explanation for the non-submission of the following scrutiny reports:-

- Levelling Up Fund
- Alternative Town Centre Usage
- Revised LDP Supplementary Planning Guidance
- Alternative Outdoor Education Offer
- Tenant Incentive Scheme

RESOLVED that the explanations for the non-submissions be noted.

9. FORTHCOMING ITEMS

The Committee received a list of forthcoming items to be considered at its next meeting to be held on the 13 December, 2023.

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that the list of forthcoming items to be considered at the next scheduled meeting on the 13th December 2023 be approved.

10. TO SIGN AS A CORRECT RECORD THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE COMMITTEE HELD ON THE 28TH SEPTEMBER 2023

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on the 28 September, 2023 be signed as a correct record.

CHAIR

DATE

Note: These minutes are subject to confirmation at the next meeting.