

COMMUNITY & REGENERATION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Thursday, 30 September 2021

PRESENT: Councillor F. Akhtar (Chair)

Councillors:

S.M. Allen (In place of H.I. Jones), W.R.A. Davies, H.L. Davies, D.C. Evans, R.E. Evans, S.J.G. Gilasbey, J.K. Howell, B.W. Jones, H.B. Shepardson, D. Thomas and G.B. Thomas

Also in attendance:

Councillor C.A. Davies, Cabinet Member for Communities and Rural Affairs
E. Dole, Leader of the Council
L.D. Evans, Cabinet Member for Housing
P. Hughes-Griffiths, Cabinet Member for Culture, Sport and Tourism
D.M. Jenkins, Cabinet Member for Resources
L.M. Stephens, Deputy Leader of the Council and Leader of the Independent Group

The following Officers were in attendance:

J. Jones, Head of Regeneration
J. Morgan, Head of Homes & Safer Communities
S. Walters, Economic Development Manager
I. Jones, Head of Leisure
A. Thomas, Group Accountant
I.R. Llewelyn, Forward Planning Manager
S. Rees, Simultaneous Translator
E. Bryer, Democratic Services Officer
K. Thomas, Democratic Services Officer

Virtual Meeting - 10.00 - 11.50 am

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors H. I. Hones and S. Matthews

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

There were no declarations of prohibited party whips.

The following declarations of interest were made

Councillor	Minute No (s)	Nature of Interest
J. Gilasbey	7 – Revenue and Capital Budget Monitoring Report 2021/22	Trustee of Kidwelly Tinsplate Museum – Has dispensation to speak but not vote

J Gilasbey	10 – Forthcoming Items	Executive Board Forward Work Programme – School in her ward is detailed in the report
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3. PUBLIC QUESTIONS (NONE RECEIVED)

The Chair advised that no public questions had been received.

4. PRIMARY TOWN CENTRE ECONOMIC RECOVERY PLANS - AMMANFORD, CARMARTHEN & LLANELLI

The Committee considered a report presented by the Leader of the Council, with responsibility for Economic Regeneration, on proposed Economic Recovery and Delivery Plans, post covid, for the three primary towns within Carmarthenshire, of Ammanford, Carmarthen and Llanelli. The plans had been formulated working closely with the Ammanford Task Force, the Carmarthen Town Centre Forum and the Llanelli Task Force, all of which comprised membership of key town stakeholders together with representatives from key internal council departments. The plans set out the impact of covid, highlighting key issues/opportunities and providing a delivery framework of be-spoke interventions for each centre. If adopted, it was envisaged the plans would be owned and delivered by the stakeholders in the three towns' respective Task Force/Forum with the Council working with potential funders in both Welsh Government and Westminster to lever funding when opportunities arose and to utilise corporate funding identified within the council's capital programme to facilitate implementation of the three plans.

It was noted that following the Committee's consideration the report would be presented to the Cabinet/Council for formal adoption

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that the Primary Town Centre Economic Recovery and Delivery Plans for Ammanford, Carmarthen and Llanelli Town Centres be endorsed.

5. ANNUAL MONITORING REPORT 2019/21 ADOPTED CARMARTHENSHIRE LOCAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN

The Committee considered the Annual Monitoring Report 2019/21 on the Adopted Carmarthenshire Local Development Plan, presented by the Deputy Leader, with responsibility for the Planning Portfolio. It was noted that the report had been prepared in accordance with the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 and the Local Development Plan (LDP) Regulations 2005. The 2004 Act required each Local Planning Authority to prepare an Annual Monitoring Report (AMR) on its LDP following adoption and to keep all matters under review that were expected to affect the development of its area and incorporating information on those matters for submission to the Welsh Government, and publication on the Council's website by 31st October each year following plan adoption. The current report covered an extended two year period reflecting the impact of Covid-19 and associated restrictions which had impacted upon the recording, availability and

reporting of data

The Committee noted the Report would be developed as further evidence and data became available ahead of its submission to the Cabinet and Council for formal approval.

The following issues were raised on the report:-

- References were made to the impact current NRW regulations on the impact of phosphates on water quality together with Nitrate Vulnerable Zones (NVZ) were having on development/regeneration not only within Carmarthenshire but Wales wide. Clarification was sought on what measures, if any, were being introduced to address their consequential detrimental impact on the construction industry.

The Committee was assured that discussions were being undertaken across Wales on these issues between local authorities, Welsh Government, Natural Resources Wales, Dwr Cymru and other interested parties to endeavour to identify a solution to the difficulties. A stakeholder meeting to discuss the phosphate issue is provisionally scheduled to be held on the 21st October 2021, and the Council would be advised in due course of any outcome which may be achieved. The council was also taking a pro-active role in identifying ways forward and solutions on the phosphate issue which included the development of a phosphate calculator and guidance on mitigation. An early resolution to both issues was deemed to be urgent due to their impact on the LDP, the determination of planning applications and regeneration within the county.

- Reference was made to the provision within the LDP for additional official gypsy and traveller sites within the county and to planning consents granted for small scale traveller sites in the countryside. Clarification was sought on the current position on the provision of another official traveller site in the county.

The Forward Planning Manager advised that two sites had been identified within the Llanelli area in the merging Revised LDP as response to the need highlighted in the Gypsy Traveller Assessment undertaken by the Council's Housing Division. That reflected the area where there was a need for additional provision and the number of pitches that may be required, and that was reflected within the LDP. That assessment had been revised and was currently with the Welsh Government for its approval/assessment.

The Head of Homes and Safer Communities referred to the small-scale provision of traveller pitches and advised that if their numbers increased, it would impact on the current assessment on the level of future need. He confirmed there was a legal requirement on the council to provide gypsy and traveller sites and it was assessing future site requirements. However, as the identified need for the provision of additional pitches was in the Llanelli area, the Council was legally bound to identify sites within that area.

- Reference was made to the effect both Brexit and Covid were having on the increased cost of building materials for the construction industry and to what consideration, if any, had been given to the potential impact those increases could have on the level of provision of affordable homes.

The Forward Planning Manager advised that, whilst material costs were an important factor the department as part of the planning process assessed the viability of planning applications and information on development costs were taken into consideration as to the level of affordable housing that could be provided from any development. As those costs increased, any resulting request received from developers for a reduction in the level of provision would be scrutinised by the department and evidential evidence would be required to support any reduction.

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that the Carmarthenshire Local Development Plan be approved for submission to the Welsh Government by the 31st October 2021

6. 2021/22 QUARTER 1 PERFORMANCE REPORT (1ST APRIL TO 30TH JUNE 2021) RELEVANT TO THIS SCRUTINY

The Committee received the 2021/22 Quarter 1 Performance Report for the period 1st April to 30th June 2021 presented by the Executive Board Members – Leader, Deputy Leader, Housing, Culture, Sport and Tourism, Communities and Rural Affairs and Resources in respect of the areas falling within their portfolios and the Committees remit.

The report detailed the progress made against the actions and measures within the Corporate Strategy and on the delivery of the 13 Well-Being Objectives. The Committee noted that 2021/22 was the first year the Council would self-evaluate and report on under the terms of the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021, especially Part 6 relating to Performance and Governance.

The following issues were raised on the report:-

- Reference was made to the government's furlough scheme coming to an end on the 30th September 2021 and to what impact that could have on Carmarthenshire County Council and businesses in relation to job losses

Whilst it was confirmed the ending of the furlough scheme would impact on the county, the Council was being pro-active in that regard and had recently, in conjunction with its partners, held a job fayre in each of the County's primary towns in Ammanford, Carmarthen and Llanelli which had received a good response. Whilst it was hopeful employment rates would increase, it was accepted some sectors would be affected more than others e.g. hospitality

The Committee was also advised that it had been estimated up to 1 million jobs across the U.K. could be at risk from the ending of furlough with 3,500 of those being within Carmarthenshire. Whilst the council's employment targets included that 3,500, the full impact of the scheme's withdrawal would need to be assessed over the coming months.

- With regard to a question on homelessness, the Committee was assured that when people presented themselves as homeless every effort was made to ensure they could be re-housed within their locality. Where that was not possible, temporary accommodation had to be provided and that may be located elsewhere within the county. Currently, the Council were housing 115 people in temporary accommodation 95 of whom were single

persons and the council would need to address the availability of single person accommodation as part of its house building programme. It was also stressed the earlier a person presented themselves as at risk of being homeless the more opportunities were available for the Council to work with them and landlords to find a solution to their housing needs.

The Head of Homes and Safer Communities advised that proposals were currently being developed on the provision of a range of temporary accommodation proposals for the county which would be submitted to the Committee/Council in due course

- With regard to a question on the use of financial contributions raised from developer Section 106 Planning agreements, the Forward Planning Manager outlined to the Committee the process and legal requirements for the entering into of such agreements and their subsequent collection and allocation. He stressed that any contributions received could only be allocated for the purposes detailed within the Agreements for example affordable housing, highway improvements, leisure or education purposes and could not be used for any other purpose. In responding specifically to the use of monies collected for affordable housing contributions received would be focussed for allocation within the locality of the development, but if for some reason it could not be used locally it could be allocated elsewhere on a sequential basis.
- In response to a question on the recent Audit Wales report on the Council's Planning Division, the Committee was advised that the Council had established an Intervention Board to address the issues raised. That had already achieved performance improvements and was striving to improve further over the coming months.

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that the report be received.

7. REVENUE & CAPITAL BUDGET MONITORING REPORT 2021/22

(NOTE: Councillor J Gilasbey, having earlier declared an interest in this item, re-declared that interest and remained in the meeting during the reports consideration)

The Committee considered a report presented by the Executive Board Member for Resources on the 2021/22 Revenue and Capital Budget Monitoring reports for the Housing, Regeneration, Planning and Leisure and Recreation Services for the period up to the 30th June, 2021. It was noted that the revenue budget was forecasting a £441k underspend, the capital budget a £33,012k underspend, whilst the Housing Revenue Account was forecasting a £1,476k underspend.

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

- In response to a question on the £176k expenditure for cockle harvesters, that related to the cost of support provided to cockle harvesters who were unable to trade following the recent oil spillage and would be refunded by the Welsh Government if not covered by insurance. The Committee was also advised that the Council was responsible for monitoring the cockle beds in the Burry Estuary

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that the Revenue and Capital Budget Monitoring

Report be received.

8. SCRUTINY ACTIONS UPDATE

The Committee received a report detailing the progress achieved in relation to requests or referrals emerging from previous meetings.

The following issue was raised on the report:-

- Reference was made to the current progress on actions CS13 and CS17 for 2019/20 and that reports thereon should be provided to a future meeting, as suggested.

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that the report be received subject to reports on Actions CS13 and CS17 for 19/20 being submitted to a future meeting of the committee.

9. EXPLANATION FOR NON-SUBMISSION OF SCRUTINY REPORT

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

- Annual Planning Performance Report 2020/21 (Planning Services)
- 2020/21 End of Year Budget Monitoring – Outturn Report

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

10. FORTHCOMING ITEMS

The Committee received a list of forthcoming items to be considered at its next meeting to be held on the 17th November 2021.

RESOLVED that the list of forthcoming items to be considered at the next scheduled meeting on the 17th November, 2021 be noted.

11. TO SIGN AS A CORRECT RECORD THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON THE 9TH AUGUST 2021

UNANAMOUSLY RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on the 9th August, 2021 be signed as a correct record.

CHAIR

DATE