

COMMUNITY & REGENERATION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

THURSDAY, 29 SEPTEMBER 2022

PRESENT: Councillor D.M. Cundy(Chair)

Councillors (In Person):

W.R.A. Davies B. Davies B.W. Jones M. Palfreman
M. Thomas

Councillors (Virtually):

H.L. Davies T. Davies J.K. Howell D. Owen
H.B. Shepardson

Also Present (In Person):

J. Morgan, Head of Homes & Safer Communities
J. Fearn, Head of Housing Property and Strategic Projects
A Bowen, Investment and Income Manager
S. Rees, Simultaneous Translator
K. Thomas, Democratic Services Officer (note taker)

Also Present (Virtually):

I. Jones, Head of Leisure
I.R. Llewelyn, Forward Planning Manager
H. Morgan, Economic Development Manager
J. Owens, Democratic Services Officer

Chamber - County Hall, Carmarthen. SA31 1JP and remotely - 11.00 - 11.05 am

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors R. Evans and R. Sparks and also from Councillor Ann Davies, Cabinet Member for Rural Affairs and Planning Policy.

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

There were no declarations of personal interest or of any prohibited party whips.

3. PUBLIC QUESTIONS (NONE RECEIVED)

The Chair advised that no public questions had been received.

4. ESTABLISHMENT OF PRE-DECISION TASK AND FINISH GROUP (DEVELOPMENT OF EMERGENCY SOCIAL HOUSING ALLOCATIONS POLICY)

The Committee considered a report on a proposal for the establishment of a pre-scrutiny Task and Finish Group with the aim of developing an Emergency Social

Housing Allocations Policy for Carmarthenshire. The policy was considered to be essential as the Council, along with all Welsh Local authorities, was experiencing an unprecedented situation whereby the demand for social housing was exceeding supply with the position having significantly worsened over recent weeks due to a number of external factors including:

- Welsh Government's 'No one left behind' approach to ensure everyone has a safe and secure place to live and to ensure that homelessness is rare, brief, and unrepeatable.
- Unintended consequences of the introduction of new Rented Homes Act;
- Huge pressures in general market in terms of house prices and rents;
- Ukraine re-settlement programme; and
- UK wide proposed asylum dispersal scheme.

The Committee was advised that if it were agreeable to establishing a task and finish group, it would also need to determine its membership and terms of reference / scoping and planning document. In that regard, as it was normal practice for such groups to comprise six members, politically balanced the Councils' political groups had been contacted in advance of the meeting and had nominated the following members to serve on the Group:-

Plaid Cymru (3)

Councillor Betsan Jones
Councillor Ken Howell
Councillor Russell Sparks

Labour (2)

Councillor Deryk Cundy
Councillor Martyn Palfreman

Independent

Cllr Hugh Shepardson

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

The Committee in considering the request, commented on the numerous issues influencing and affecting the increased demand for, and availability of, social housing, as outlined above. It also referenced a need for improvement in the turn-around times for bringing council house voids back into circulation to increase the level of available housing. In response, the Head of Housing Property and Strategic Projects advised of procedures currently in place, and being developed, to improve those times which included discussions with contractors and the re-tendering of the Contractor framework in 2023. It was confirmed the issue of Voids would form part of the Group's discussions.

The committee was further apprised of numerous initiatives already implemented by the Housing Division to assist people facing homeless, including encouraging the return of empty private homes into use and regular liaison with social landlords via the local landlord forum

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED:-

- 4.1 That a Pre-decision Scrutiny Task and Finish Group be established to develop an Emergency Social Housing Allocations**

- Policy for Carmarthenshire;**
- 4.2 That the Task and Finish Group comprise 6 members politically balanced and the membership be as detailed above;**
- 4.3 That the Task and Finish Group's terms of reference/ scoping and planning document be approved**

5. COMMUNITY AND REGENERATION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - ANNUAL REPORT 2021/22

The Committee received its Annual Report on the work undertaken during the 2021/22 municipal year. It was noted that the report had been prepared in accordance with Article 6.2 of the Council's Constitution and provided an overview of the work programme and key issues addressed, whilst also incorporating any issues referred to, or from, the Cabinet, Task and Finish reviews and development sessions.

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that the report be received.

6. COMMUNITY AND REGENERATION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME FOR 2022/23

The Committee, in accordance with Article 6.2 of the Council's constitution, considered its draft 2022/23 Forward Work Plan detailing issues and reports to be considered during the course of the municipal year.

The Committee, in considering the draft plan noted that five of the reports scheduled for its meeting on the 29th September 2022 had been deferred (Minute no 7 refers) to the 16th November Meeting and, accordingly, the Plan would need to be amended to reflect those deferrals

The following issues were raised on the report:

- In relation to the five reports referred to the November meeting, views were expressed that their addition would not be conducive to good scrutiny and that, if at all possible some of the scheduled items should be moved to the December meeting
- Reference was made to the inclusion of site visits within the plan and for those to commence as soon as was practicable to assist the new committee members gain an insight into some of the facilities within the Committees remit
- The Committee was reminded that it had previously undertaken site visits to the Pendine Outdoor Education Centre, St Clears Leisure Centre and Y Gât, St Clears. It was suggested that update reports on those facilities should be provided to a future meeting.

The Head of Leisure reminded the Committee that an update report on Pendine Outdoor Education Centre had been provided to its December 2021 meeting where it had agreed to support its continued use. Whilst it was recognised the building's physical condition was a matter of concern, the authority did not have the necessary capital funding at the present time

to undertake improvement works. However, an update report could be presented to a future meeting

With regard to Y Gât, discussions were progressing with St Clears Town Council with a view to completion of the Asset Transfer by 1st April 2023. The position with St Clears Leisure Centre was that whilst an asset management plan had been completed to improve the visitor experience, the lack of capital funding was hindering its implementation. However, additional funding had been secured from various sources enabling some works to be undertaken

- It was suggested that in view of the Committee's regeneration remit, the committee could, in the future, also examine a number of areas in that field including, for example, the UK Government's levelling up proposals, Shared prosperity, Implementation of the Economic Development Plan, Town Centre Improvement Plans together with Section 106 Agreements

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that the draft 2022/23 Forward Work Plan be endorsed subject to:

- **The number of reports scheduled for the November meeting being re-examined with a view to some being deferred to the December meeting, if possible**
- **An update report on the Pendine Outdoor Education Centre being submitted to a future meeting.**

7. EXPLANATION FOR NON-SUBMISSION OF SCRUTINY REPORT

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

- Q1 Performance Management
- Council Annual Report
- Innovation Strategy
- Planning Annual Monitoring Report (Adopted Carmarthenshire Local Development Plan)
- Planning Annual Performance Report

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

8. TO SIGN AS A CORRECT RECORD THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON THE 31ST JANUARY 2022

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on the 31st January, 2022 be signed as a correct record.

CHAIR

DATE