

EXECUTIVE BOARD

Monday, 24 May 2021

PRESENT: Councillor E. Dole (Chair)

Councillors:

C.A. Davies, G. Davies, H.A.L. Evans, L.D. Evans, P.M. Hughes, P. Hughes-Griffiths, D.M. Jenkins, L.M. Stephens and J. Tremlett

Also in attendance:

Councillor D.M. Cundy

The following Officers were in attendance:

W. Walters, Chief Executive

J. Morgan, Director of Community Services

C. Moore, Director of Corporate Services

L.R. Jones, Head of Administration and Law

R. Mullen, Director of Environment

G. Morgans, Director of Education & Children's Services

P.R. Thomas, Assistant Chief Executive (People Management & Performance)

H. Pugh, Head of Revenues and Financial Compliance

I.R. Llewelyn, Forward Planning Manager

S. Rees, Simultaneous Translator

D. Hockenfull, Marketing and Media Manager

L. Jenkins, Executive Board Support Officer

E. Evans, Principal Democratic Services Officer

M. Evans Thomas, Principal Democratic Services Officer

K. Thomas, Democratic Services Officer

E. Bryer, Democratic Services Officer

Virtual Meeting - 10.00 am - 10.50 am

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies for absence.

2. DECLARATIONS OF PERSONAL INTEREST

Councillor	Minute Number	Nature of Interest
C. A. Davies	10 - UK Government Funding	Cycle path runs through the farm that is run with her husband.
L.M. Stephens	12 - Capital Programme 2020/21 Update.	Governor of Ysgol Bro Myrddin.
P. Hughes-Griffiths	12 - Capital Programme 2020/21 Update.	Governor of Ysgol Bro Myrddin.

3. TO SIGN AS A CORRECT RECORD THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE EXECUTIVE BOARD HELD ON THE 26TH APRIL, 2021

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Executive Board held on the 26th April, 2021 be signed as a correct record.

4. QUESTIONS ON NOTICE BY MEMBERS

The Chair advised that no questions on notice had been submitted by members.

5. PUBLIC QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

The Chair advised that no public questions had been received.

6. ADVANCING PROGRESSIVE PROCUREMENT

The Executive Board were advised that the report had been withdrawn pending consideration by the relevant Scrutiny Committee. It was noted that the report and any Scrutiny recommendations would be considered by the Executive Board at a later date.

7. CARMARTHENSHIRE ECONOMIC RECOVERY AND DELIVERY PLAN

The Executive Board were advised that the report had been withdrawn pending consideration by the relevant Scrutiny Committee. It was noted that the report and any Scrutiny recommendations would be considered by the Executive Board at a later date.

8. DRAFT LOCAL DEVELOPMENT ORDERS AMMANFORD AND CARMARTHEN TOWN CENTRES

The Executive Board considered a report setting out progress and proposals in relation to the preparation of Local Development Orders (LDO) for Ammanford and Carmarthen Town Centres.

The Deputy Leader advised that the consultation period for the Draft LDOs commenced on the 12th January, 2021 and closed on the 26th February, 2021. It was noted that in total some 19 representations were received from a range of organisations and interested parties.

It was noted that since the COVID-19 outbreak, businesses within Carmarthen and Ammanford town centres had struggled, with some businesses deciding to shut down. The report sought to address this interim position through the consideration and designation of LDO's for Ammanford and Carmarthen Town Centres.

The Board was advised that an LDO would simplify the planning process by removing the need for planning applications, allowing developers to progress with more speed and certainty whilst reducing costs. In town centres, LDOs would help address the problem of vacant properties to achieve more viable and vibrant centres.

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND TO COUNCIL to:

- 8.1 consider the representations received in respect of the Draft Local Development Orders (LDO) for Ammanford and Carmarthen Town Centres.**
- 8.2 approve the recommendations of the report.**
- 8.3 approve the submission of the LDO (inclusive of the recommendations of this report, and evidence updates) to the Welsh Government for agreement (subject to a satisfactory EIA).**
- 8.4 grant officers delegated authority to make non-substantive typographical or factual amendments as necessary to improve the clarity and accuracy of the LDO and to update the evidence base and make any consequential changes to the LDO, and to ensure any additional matters of legal compliance are also integrated.**

9. CARMARTHENSHIRE BUSINESS FLOOD RELIEF AND INFRASTRUCTURE FUND

The Executive Board received a report requesting consideration of an overall package of support for businesses recovering from Covid 19 and flooding.

It was noted that Businesses in Carmarthenshire had continued to suffer from increasing occurrences of storm flooding. Due to this, a report was presented and approved at the Leader EBM meeting on the 17th March in order to approve the continuation of the original Business Flood Relief Fund to assist Carmarthenshire Businesses. The EBM report also approved the use of the remaining budget (£96k) from the original £200k set aside from CREF to deliver the Business Flood Relief Fund in 2018. The approval also covered an amendment to original eligibility criteria enabling businesses who had suffered from flooding over the last three years to access funding support for pro-active projects to protect their properties from future flood damage.

The Board was advised that support would be given to developing a project in Llangadog that benefitted both the community and a major local employer in the town. Initial discussions had taken place with NRW and Cambrian Pet Food in relation to a potential partnership project with each party funding a third of costs of a project to tackle repeated flooding that affects the highway, local business and residents alike and circa £50k would be allocated to this scheme.

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED to approve an overall package of support to businesses recovering from Covid 19 and flooding by:

- 9.1 setting aside £25k from existing Regeneration Capital Funds for the acquisition of a stock of de-humidifiers (estimated at £1,500 per item 16 units in total) to be held centrally and then loaned to support affected businesses with immediate flood damage mitigation.**
- 9.2 setting aside the £96k remaining from the initial £200k allocation from the Carmarthenshire Rural Enterprise Fund (as approved in Leader EBM 17th March 2021).**
- 9.3 setting aside £200k of existing Regeneration Capital funds to undertake pilot projects to undertake works in partnership with key stakeholder and affected businesses to bolster flood defences and mitigate against repeat**

flooding to undertake infrastructure improvement up to maximum of £50k per project.

10. UK GOVERNMENT FUNDING

[NOTE: Councillor C. A. Davies having earlier declared an interest in this item withdrew from the meeting.]

The Executive Board received a report providing an update on UK Government funding opportunities which would impact Carmarthenshire.

It was noted that as part of the UK Chancellor's Budget announcement on the 3rd of March 2021, the UK Government announced a number of new funding programmes and initiatives. The report detailed two of the new programmes, the Levelling Up Fund and the Community Renewal Fund.

The Leader advised that £800m was being made available via the Levelling up fund to Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland over four years. The Fund would invest in a range of local investment priorities including local transport schemes, regeneration projects and cultural assets. Applicants would be encouraged to include a local financial contribution representing at least 10% of total costs.

The Board was advised that the Levelling Up Fund was a capital only fund, administered by HM Treasury (HMT), the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) and the Department for Transport (DfT). Funding would be delivered directly through Local Authorities with Welsh Government being consulted in the assessment of relevant bids.

The number of bids that a local authority could make relates to the number of MPs in their area; with Carmarthenshire falling within 3 different parliamentary constituencies there would be an opportunity to submit up to 3 applications covering the County (2 in respect of constituencies wholly within Carmarthenshire and 1 on a shared basis where the constituency is cross border). In respect of Carmarthen West, (a joint constituency with South Pembrokeshire), there would be a need to engage with Pembrokeshire County Council on a joint submission. Additionally, Local Authorities could submit one transport bid. Transport-only bids would be allocated independently of constituency boundaries and subject to a more detailed business case process. It was noted that applications for the first round of funding must be submitted to UK Government by the 18th June 2021.

The Board was advised that the £220m Community Renewal Fund would support communities to pilot projects and new approaches ahead of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund which would be launched in 2022. The Leader stated that the fund would be 90% revenue funding with all projects required to be financially completed by 31st March 2022. The Fund would be a competitive process with no pre-set eligibility. The UK Government had identified 100 priority places and Carmarthenshire identified within the top 100 places. Carmarthenshire had also been identified as a lead authority and would be expected to invite project proposals and appraise and prioritise a shortlist of projects up to a maximum of £3 million per place. The shortlist of projects would be submitted to the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government by the 18th June 2021.

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED to:

10.1 retrospectively approve the process established for the Community Renewal Fund in Carmarthenshire.

10.2 consider and endorse the submission of applications under the Levelling Up Fund.

11. COUNCIL'S REVENUE BUDGET MONITORING REPORT

The Executive Board considered the revenue budget monitoring report which provided the latest budgetary position as at 28th February 2021, in respect of 2020/2021. The budget position recognised the substantial additional pressures that had been placed on the Authority in responding to the Covid19 pandemic and the support provided by Welsh Government

Overall, the monitoring report forecasted an end of year underspend of £1,980k on the Authority's net revenue budget with an underspend at departmental level of £1,872k.

The Executive Board noted that whilst reports earlier in the year, have indicated a significant overspend due to the impact of Covid-19, the current projected position had now significantly improved, with the additional Covid-19 related costs and lost income being largely refunded from the Welsh Government hardship scheme.

It was further noted that whilst revenue budget underspends would be seen as favourable, the details outlined in the report illustrated that this continued to impact front line service delivery as well as the unavoidable reduction/suspension of some preventative services. This, along with any continued delays to the delivery of savings presented a significant risk to future years budgets.

Commentaries against specific budget variances where assumptions had been made where shown within Appendix A appended to the report.

Executive Board Members noted that the report stated that Council Tax collection remained an area of significant concern. Carmarthenshire experienced a marked reduction in payments during the first quarter, which it is unlikely to fully recover during the year. Whilst WG have provided financial support, allocated on an RSG formula basis, it was anticipated there would still be a shortfall overall. The increase in bad debt provision was now reflected within the forecast.

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that:

11.1 The Budget Monitoring report be received, and consideration given to the budgetary position and appropriate corrective action.

11.2 Chief Officers and Heads of Service critically review options available to them to limit the forecasted overspend of budgets, whilst recognising the pressure Covid-19 has placed on the Authority's overall budget.

12. CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2020/21 UPDATE

[Note: Councillors. L.M. Stephens and P. Hughes-Griffiths declared an interest during consideration of this item.]

The Executive Board considered a report which provided an update of the latest budgetary position for the 2020/21 capital programme as at the 28th February, 2021.

Appendix A appended to the report showed a forecasted net spend of £34,525k was forecasted compared with a working net budget of £76,120k giving a - £41,595k variance. The Executive Board Member for Resources reported that the significant variance projected at this time continued to be largely attributed to the restrictions associated with the Covid-19 pandemic and followed an adjustment to the budgets to reflect £38m slipped to future years.

The report detailed additional Schemes to the Capital Programme which sought Executive Board approval.

The Board considered the main variances detailed within each department appended to the report at Appendix B.

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that:

12.1 the capital programme update report be received.

12.2 the additional projects detailed in the report be approved.

13. ANY OTHER ITEMS OF BUSINESS THAT BY REASONS OF SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES THE CHAIR DECIDES SHOULD BE CONSIDERED AS A MATTER OF URGENCY PURSUANT TO SECTION 100B(4)(B) OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT, 1972.

The Chair advised that there were no items of urgent business.

CHAIR

DATE