

Minutes of the Meeting of the Thriving Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee held at the Council Chamber, Neuadd Cyngor Ceredigion, Penmorfa, Aberaeron and remotely on Wednesday, 23 October 2024

Present: Councillor Gwyn Wigley Evans (Vice-Chair), Councillors Shelley Childs, Gethin Davies, Meirion Davies, Rhodri Davies, Wyn Evans, Sian Maehrlein, Ann Bowen Morgan, John Roberts & Carl Worrall.

Also in attendance: Councillors Euros Davies, Elizabeth Evans, Eryl Evans, Raymond Evans, Rhodri Evans, Hugh Hughes & Gareth Lloyd.

Cabinet Members present: Councillors Clive Davies, Gareth Davies, Keith Henson & Wyn Thomas.

Officers in attendance: Dr Sarah Groves-Phillips, Corporate Manager: Planning Services; Eifion Jones, Public Rights of Way Officer; Phil Jones, Corporate Manager: Highways Services; Andrew McKniff, Project & Programme Manager: EV Charging Infrastructure; Duncan Hall, Corporate Lead Officer: Finance & Procurement; Lisa Evans, Standards and Scrutiny Officer & Neris Morgans, Democratic Services Officer.

(10.00am- 12.48pm)

1 Apologies

- i. Councillor Marc Davies, Chair apologised for his inability to attend the meeting.
- ii. Councillors Shelley Childs and Ann Bowen Morgan apologised for joining the meeting late.

2 Disclosures of personal interest (including whipping declarations) Members are reminded of their personal responsibility to declare any personal and prejudicial interest in respect of matters contained in this agenda in accordance with the provisions of the Local Government Act 2000, the Council's Constitution and the Members Code of Conduct. In addition, Members must declare any prohibited party whip which the Member has been given in relation to the meeting as per the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011.

There were no disclosures of Personal and Prejudicial Interests (including whipping declarations) from Committee Members.

3 Chair Announcements

None.

4 Update on Planning service workstreams

Councillor Clive Davies (Cabinet Member for Economy and Regeneration) explained that the report outlined the current position of various work streams of the Planning Service under the new appointment of Dr Sarah Groves-Phillips as Corporate Manager and updated members on areas of interest in relation to national and local issues.

Dr Sarah Groves-Phillips, Corporate Manager: Planning Services provided the Committee with an update on the following matters:

- Phosphates and Nutrient Management Board (NMB)
- Local Development Plan (LDP) and Strategic Development Plan (SDP) work
- Development Management
- Placemaking
- National Policy i.e. TAN 15, Marine Nutrient Release
- Building Control

Members were provided with the opportunity to ask questions which were answered by Dr Sarah Groves-Phillips and Councillor Clive Davies. The main points raised were as follows:

- Members thanked Dr Sarah Groves-Phillips for a detailed report.
- Congratulations were extended to all 6 Building Control Officers for their success at a recent competency examination, which enabled all to be registered at the appropriate level.
- It was clarified that the NMB adopted their Nutrient Management Plan on 2 October 2024 as planned. It would take 3 Asset Management Plan cycles totalling 15 years to solve the phosphates issue in the river Teifi, but Dŵr Cymru Welsh Water was focused and a reduction of 65% should be seen in the next 5 years. The local authority (LA) would focus on mitigation measures within their remit such as raising awareness of pollution from domestic dwellings (e.g. maintaining septic tanks) and lobbying Welsh Government (WG) on the strategic use of wetlands.
- No economic integrated impact assessment had been completed on the impact of the phosphates restrictions. Consideration could be given to an assessment in due course.
- Members expressed concerns with the possibility of Cardigan Bay Marine SAC failing, as any restrictions would potentially result in a further development embargo. Although the Marine Nutrient Release was due to be published by the end of 2024, no engagement with LPAs prior to the release as agreed had been undertaken yet.
- Concerns were raised with the capacity and the finance required to progress the SDP, which was a requirement by the Corporate Joint Committee (CJC). It was noted that the SDP sub-group had recommended to the CJC that it was not appropriate to continue with the work at present until further resources were made available.
- Indicative figures and different options had been drafted to address issues with planning enforcement. It was noted that it would be beneficial to hear the views of the Committee prior to the budget-setting process.
- Information on placemaking was available on the Council's website. A drop-in session would possibly be held next year to support Town and Community Councils where possible.

It was AGREED to note the report.

5 Local Access Forum (LAF) Annual Report

Councillor Clive Davies (Cabinet Member for Economy and Regeneration) explained that the Ceredigion LAF was set up under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 to advise the County Council, Natural Resources

Wales (NRW) and others on the way that access to the countryside was improved and managed. LAFs represented a broad spectrum of interests and members played an important role in improving and managing access to the County's diverse and attractive countryside. LAF members were appointed on a three-year basis; Ceredigion County Council as the Appointing Authority appointed the current Forum in 2022, and members will sit until 2025. Officers and volunteers were thanked for their work.

Eifion Jones, Public Rights of Way Officer and the LAF Secretary provided an overview of the LAF Annual report, its work and role. Not only was the Forum a statutory body encouraged to set its own agenda, but it was also key to attract grants in excess of £100,000 a year and a partner in the management of Rights of Way and Access. The annual report had been prepared in accordance with Regulation 16 of the Countryside Access (Local Access Forums) (Wales) Regulations 2001.

Members were provided with the opportunity to ask questions which were answered by Eifion Jones and Councillor Clive Davies. The main points raised were as follows:

- Ensuring the LAF had the correct balance of representatives was the responsibility of Ceredigion County Council as the appointing authority. It was noted that attracting members could be challenging at times.
- The maintenance of Rights of Way and Access was the LAF's key focus and new access was created where suitable. Members were encouraged to contact the team if they were aware of any issues locally.

It was AGREED to note the information to raise awareness of the work of the Local Access Forum and the preparation of the Annual Report.

6 On-street residential electric vehicle (EV) charging Infrastructure

Councillor Keith Henson (Cabinet Member for Highways and Environmental Services and Carbon Management) provided an overview of the proposed Phase 5 for On-street residential/public EV charging as set out within the Net Zero Action Plan. This was a progression from the initial phases 1 - 3 installing public EV charge point installations in public car parks, leisure centres, community halls etc. Phase 4 was currently underway. The current position as presented in the report was shared with the Committee. The LA has been successful in the bid for a WG fund 'On-street EV Charging Ambition Fund' where it was advised that only two LAs would receive a grant of £120,000 under the Ultra Low Emission Vehicle Transformation Fund.

Phil Jones, Corporate Manager: Highways Services stated that it was important to note that technology evolved very quickly, and the next phase was a trial therefore there could be challenges along the way.

Members were provided with the opportunity to ask questions which were answered by Officers and Councillor Keith Henson. The main points raised were as follows:

- Officers and Cabinet Members raised concerns with the grid's capacity at any given opportunity. The Distribution Network Operator advised on the amount of electrical power required to ensure the existing supply went unaffected when any new infrastructure was planned.

- Officers were in consultation with the contractors to upgrade some of the fast chargers already in place to rapid chargers, subject to funding.
- Work was ongoing to establish companies that would be able to carry out the requirements of the on-street residential EV charging infrastructure under the new WG framework.
- As funding was initially until the end of March 2025, other funding streams closing in December 2024 would need to be considered. Hopefully, they would be in a position to report back on the progress in Spring 2025. It was noted that the Project & Programme Manager - EV Charging Infrastructure post was subject to grant funding.

It was AGREED to note the report.

7 Oversight of in year Financial matters

Duncan Hall, Corporate Lead Officer: Finance and Procurement provided an overview of the 24/25 Controllable Revenue Budget - Financial Performance - Quarter 1 presented to the Cabinet on 03.09.24. The 24/25 Budget setting process was a challenge and included circa 70 Budget Reduction proposals being approved totalling c£5.8m. Progress in delivering these Budget Reductions was reviewed and monitored by the Leadership Group at the end of every month. At the quarter 1 point in the year, the financial position continued to be challenging and at this stage, a projected overspend was forecast for the year of £101k on the Controllable Budget. However, this excluded certain risks in relation to the delivery of in-year savings.

An overview of the Budget Performance - Key challenges related to the Committee's remit was provided. Since the writing of the report, the National Payawards for 2024/25 for general staff had been agreed, being £1,290 for each spinal point (up to and including SCP43) and 2.5% for all grades above this. The pay offer was slightly above that budgeted by c£260k, therefore a one-off contingency sum of £250k was set aside in reserves as part of the 23/24 Outturn position.

Reference was given to the Budget Performance – Budget Savings noted in the report. The BRAG Status on the 24/25 Budget Reductions has since been updated, with 11 of the items now categorised as amber and 2 as red, partly due to recent political decisions. Items 55 (Arriva Site, Aberystwyth), 56 (Parking on the Promenade in Aberystwyth) and 57 (Car Parking - Fees & Charges) from the Budget Reductions Proposals for 24/25 were in progress pending a political decision whilst item 67 (Household Waste Sites) was delayed at present. An overview of the Key Benefits and Service Positions as presented in the report was provided.

From a Capital Programme perspective, the Aberaeron Coastal Protection scheme was currently on budget, and risks were being managed by the board.

Members were provided with the opportunity to ask questions which were answered by Duncan Hall and Councillor Gareth Davies. The main points raised were as follows:

- No statements on workforce reductions would be done unless very necessary. Natural wastage was managed, and consideration was given to whether there was a need to fill a vacancy in a specific time frame.
- The savings/ income value for item 56 (Parking on the Promenade in Aberystwyth) would be revised subject to a political decision, but indicative figures based on the figures presented in the consultation suggested a £700000 full-year saving/income.

It was AGREED to note the report.

8 To confirm the Minutes of the previous Meeting and to consider any matters arising from those Minutes

It was AGREED to confirm the minutes of the meeting held on 5 September 2024.

Matters arising: Following a question related to the progress of the Street Pay and Display Car Park Review proposals and the On-street Charged for Parking Proposals - Aberystwyth Promenade, Phil Jones, Corporate Manager agreed to confirm with the Committee in due course where both proposals were at.

9 To consider the Overview and Scrutiny Forward Work Programme

It was AGREED to note the contents of the Forward Work Programme presented subject to the following:

- EV Charging Points update (to include information on different types of chargers and charging time) - Spring 2025
- Enforcement Service update- December 2024
- NRW Recreation Strategy
- Enforcement of parking issues including pavement parking
- Consideration of parking permits for workers in Aberystwyth (following the outcome of the Street Pay and Display Car Park Review proposals and the On-street Charged for Parking Proposals - Aberystwyth Promenade)

10 Any other business

Concerns were raised that following the resurfacing of the carpark near Sainsbury's in Lampeter, parent and child parking bays were no longer available.

Phil Jones, Corporate Manager: Highways Services explained that his service area did not hold responsibility for parking services, however, he encouraged the local member to resubmit her query to Clic.

Confirmed at the Meeting of the Thriving Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 18 December 2024

Chairman: _____

Date: _____