

COMMUNITIES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of a meeting of the Communities Scrutiny Committee held in Conference Room 1a, County Hall, Ruthin on Thursday, 18 April 2013 at 9.30 am.

PRESENT

Councillors Huw Hilditch-Roberts (Chair), Rhys Hughes, Win Mullen-James, Bob Murray, Joe Welch, Cefyn Williams, Cheryl Williams and Huw Williams (Vice-Chair)

Observers: Councillors Meirick Davies and Huw Jones

ALSO PRESENT

Corporate Director Customers (HW), Rhyl Going Forward Manager (TB), Active Lifestyles Manager (RR), Sport and Physical Activity Programme Manager (SB), Corporate Communications and Marketing Manager (GW), Communications Marketing and Leisure Officer (VSM), Public Protection Manger (EJ), Scrutiny Coordinator (RE) and Committee Administrator (KEJ)

1 APOLOGIES

Councillors James Davies and Carys Guy

2 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

No declarations of personal or prejudicial interest had been raised.

3 URGENT MATTERS AS AGREED BY THE CHAIR

No urgent matters were raised.

4 MINUTES

The minutes of the Communities Scrutiny Committee held on 28 February 2013 were submitted.

Matters Arising – Page 2, Item No. 4 Minutes: Grit Issues – The Scrutiny Coordinator advised that this item had been placed on the agenda of the next Dee Valley Member Area Group meeting on 29 April where clarification would be provided as requested.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 28 February 2013 be received and approved as a correct record.

5 RHYL GOING FORWARD UPDATE

The Rhyl Going Forward Manager (RGFM) submitted a report (previously circulated) providing an update on the Rhyl Going Forward (RGF) Regeneration Strategy. The strategy contained the following four work streams –

- West Rhyl Regeneration Area
- Town Centre
- Seafront and Tourism
- Live & Work in Rhyl

The RGFM elaborated upon the each of the work streams summarising the main aims and objectives for the particular areas; progress in reaching those targets, and future considerations. He also responded to a number of issues raised by members during consideration of their last update report.

Members questioned the RGFM regarding progress with individual projects and sought assurances regarding future outcomes for particular developments. He responded as follows –

- explained the lack of progress with developing the Ocean Plaza site because of issues relating to the electricity power supply and flood risk
- confirmed that the demolition of the Honey Club was imminent following completion of the outstanding contractual issue
- the public enquiry for the compulsory purchase order for properties in West Rhyl would commence in May and it was hoped a second phase of demolition to create green space would be carried out at the end of May
- revised plans for the next phase of coastal defence works were awaited in order to assess the possibility of relocating the Skatepark to that area
- confirmed that a compulsory purchase order had been made for the burnt out arcade on the promenade with a public enquiry scheduled for June and negotiations were still ongoing to acquire the premises
- provided an update on the future of the Suncentre and its present condition and dialogue between the Council and Clwyd Leisure Limited in that regard; it was hoped that the Suncentre would continue operating as long as possible until the development of any new proposals; confirmation regarding the revised opening date for the 2013 season was still awaited.

Members discussed their concerns regarding the town centre and impact of online sales; loss of shops generally including two flagship retailers to Prestatyn's new retail development, and were concerned that objectives had yet to be developed and agreed to address the issues. The committee sought assurances that initiatives were being developed to support and attract businesses highlighting the need to attract the right type of business to enhance the town and complement existing offers and ensure longevity and sustainability of businesses. The RGFM confirmed the need to develop a coherent regeneration strategy as soon as possible and reported upon a range of initiatives being considered including reduced business rates, review of car parking and improvements to Rhyl Market. He referred to potential future funding from the Welsh Government's New Regeneration Framework to address such issues in the town. The committee highlighted that problems facing Rhyl's town centre were replicated across the county and the Chair referred to his attendance at an Economic Ambition Workshop the previous day when the same issues had been discussed and he advised that work was also ongoing in that forum to address them. Councillor Bob Murray

reported upon the detrimental impact on Prestatyn's High Street since the new retail park had opened advising that work was also ongoing to tackle that problem.

The importance of education as part of the live and work strategy was also highlighted and the Corporate Director Customers referred to the impact of good schools and quality education on the economy. He responded to questions regarding the historically poor state of the Rhyl High School building and plans to develop a new school building which were progressing well. He added that the quality of secondary education provided within the Rhyl area had improved.

Finally members discussed road access into the town and the RGFM referred to the limiting crossing points as a result of the railway. Creation of a new access road was cost prohibitive but other forms of traffic management were being considered to ease congestion and aid traffic flow.

In closing the Chair felt there would be merit in producing one overall strategic document detailing the vision for Rhyl and it was agreed to receive this document with the next progress report. He also highlighted the need to develop objectives for the Town Centre and Live & Work elements as a matter of some urgency.

The committee commended the RGFM on his work and achievements to date in implementing Rhyl's regeneration strategy.

RESOLVED that –

- (a) *the progress report on implementing the Rhyl Going Forward Regeneration Strategy be received and noted, and*
- (b) *a further progress report be received by the committee in July to include an overall strategic document detailing the long term vision for Rhyl. [Tom Booty to action]*

6 DENBIGHSHIRE PLAY SUFFICIENCY ASSESSMENT

Councillor Huw Jones, Lead Member for Tourism, Leisure and Youth introduced the Active Lifestyles Manager and Sports and Physical Activity Programme Manager and presented the draft Play Sufficiency Assessment and Action Plan (previously circulated). The Welsh Government required all local authorities to undertake the assessment and develop an action plan setting out how they planned to provide play opportunities for children and address identified gaps in provision.

Details of the assessment had been provided including the individual areas considered and the extensive consultation with both internal and external partners. Members' attention was drawn to the key themes/priorities emerging from the assessment which had been included within the action plan to be addressed during the period 2013 – 2014 together with future plans for 2014 and beyond.

During debate members queried whether funding would be available from the Welsh Government (WG) to progress the action plan. The Active Lifestyles Manager (ALM) explained that no indications had been given as to whether funding

would be a provided and feedback was awaited following submission of the assessment last month. The council had already committed funding from its own budget to progress the actions detailed in 2013 – 2014.

Members referred to play provision within their own communities and raised the following issues –

- the lack of absence of play provision in some rural/countryside areas
- difficulties associated with opening school playgrounds to the wider community (including pre-schoolers being unable to access provision during school hours and damage caused to playgrounds when used for particular activities such as football)
- lack of play schemes/sportszone in operation across the county
- the need for target marketing of play/sports schemes in order to publicise and promote events and increase take up rates
- encouraging town/community councils to contribute financially to play/sports provision, and
- the poor state of some play equipment and importance of maintenance.

The Corporate Director Communities referred to the merits of undertaking the assessment which provided a clearer picture for Denbighshire in terms of provision and identifying areas to be addressed. The officers also responded to members comments as follows –

- one of the actions within the plan specifically related to rural areas and play provision
- highlighted the need for a co-ordinated approach between education, leisure and town/community councils to develop play within those towns/communities
- reported upon current play/sports provision across the county and elaborated upon plans for future provision
- agreed with target marketing of play events and referred to the success and popularity of the recent soft play sessions which had been promoted through family information services
- maintenance of play equipment had been included within the audit.

The committee was supportive of the assessment and action plan and keen to hear the WG's response thereto and whether the WG would be awarding funding to progress the identified actions. Members were also keen to receive the revised action plan with a timeline for delivering actions. Consequently it was –

RESOLVED that –

- subject to members' comments above, the committee notes the content of the report and action plan and supports the commitment to Play Development in Denbighshire, and*
- an information report be submitted to the committee to include the Welsh Government's response to the Play Sufficiency Assessment and action plan*

*and whether any funding was being awarded by the Welsh Government together with a revised action plan to include agreed timescales for actions.
[Jamie Groves / Sian Bennett / Rhian Roberts to action]*

At this juncture (10.45 a.m.) the committee adjourned for a refreshment break.

7 PROGRESS REPORT ON ANTI DOG FOULING CAMPAIGN

The Communication, Marketing & Leisure and Corporate Communications & Marketing Managers submitted a joint report (previously circulated) regarding progress of the Anti-Dog Fouling Campaign following its soft launch in February.

Officers provided details of the activities carried out to date in addressing dog fouling issues including the substantial marketing campaign and drive to educate people together with robust enforcement action in order to reduce the number of incidents. Key hotspot areas had been identified and monitored and a number of supporting activities were being planned for the future. A power point presentation was also shown detailing promotional materials; press coverage; the marketing plan and the mapping of hotspot areas. Updated statistics collated from the Customer Services Management System and calls from the dedicated Freephone number were also provided. The marketing campaign involved a drip feed approach in order to continually reinforce the message and encourage communities to become involved and report problems.

The Public Protection Manager provided details of the enforcement approach with Kingdom Security Services being employed to address issues around dog fouling and littering. North Wales Police had also instructed Police Community Support Officers and Community Beat Managers to issue fixed penalty notices and provide information to the council on problem areas.

Members welcomed the Anti-Dog Fouling Campaign as a proactive way of addressing dog fouling within the county together with robust enforcement action. The committee was pleased to note the measures taken to engage with the public and the positive feedback received together with an increase in the number of reported incidents to identify hotspot areas and target offenders. During debate members took the opportunity to raise questions with the officers regarding various aspects of the campaign and sought further details regarding enforcement action and overall costs. The following concerns and comments were also raised –

- the need to target rural areas as part of the campaign and undertake enforcement action and high visibility patrols in those areas to deter offenders
- highlighted persistent problems at Moel Famau and the need to take the matter up with the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) management to address the issue, particularly the AONB's resistance to the siting of waste bins in the AONB
- delays in locating dog bins in problem areas identified by members
- the need for both covert and high visibility enforcement patrols and professional and courteous officers

- concerns regarding stray dogs and cases where owners let their dogs wander unaccompanied
- the presence of old signage within communities which may cause confusion
- the importance of engaging with the community in order to work together to tackle dog fouling issues
- the need to review the effectiveness of the campaign and associated costs
- concerns that the number of fixed penalty notices issued for littering far exceed those issued for dog fouling
- advocated greater use of social media as a marketing tool, and
- members detailed a number of problem areas within their communities which would benefit from dog bins and enforcement action and made requests for literature to disseminate in their areas.

Officers acknowledged members' points and responded as follows –

- reported upon the programme of relocating signage and promotional material around the county targeting hotspot areas and monitoring the impact
- dog control orders were being considered as a means of addressing specific problem areas which may be applied to sites such as Moel Famau/AONB
- 119 dog bins had been purchased for siting in areas identified by members
- a mixture of both covert and high visibility enforcement patrols were undertaken as appropriate depending upon circumstances
- other public protection officers were responsible for collecting stray dogs and any information in that regard would be welcomed and acted upon
- following the introduction of dog control orders a review of signage would be carried out to ensure it was appropriate and relevant
- welcomed the involvement of the wider community in addressing the problems and provided a number of examples of initiatives involving schools and town/community councils which would be encouraged
- the intention to review the effectiveness of the campaign after six months and report back to this committee on the findings
- noted the problem areas identified by members and requests for promotional literature.

In terms of costs and income generation associated with enforcement duties it was established that income from fixed penalty notices was split between Kingdom Security Services (KSS) £45 and the Council £30. KSS recovered the fines but cases of non-payment were referred to Legal Services for prosecution. Officers also advised that KSS officers were salaried but there was some element of performance related pay. Following further discussion it was –

RESOLVED that –

- (a) *subject to members' comments above, the report highlighting the progress and impact of the approach to addressing the dog fouling issue in the county be received and noted, and*
- (b) *a further progress report be received by the committee in approximately six months' time to include full costings of the campaign and enforcement*

action, impact of the campaign, statistics, information on the number of legal cases pursued/outstanding, and comparison on the number of fixed penalty notices issued for dog fouling and littering. [Hywyn Williams / Jamie Groves / Gareth Watson / Vicki Shenton-Morris / Emlyn Jones to action]

At this point the Chair left the meeting and the Vice Chair, Councillor Huw Williams presided over the remaining items of business.

8 SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME

A report by the Scrutiny Coordinator was submitted (previously circulated) seeking members' review of the committee's future work programme and providing an update on relevant issues. A draft forward work programme (Appendix 1); Cabinet's forward work programme (Appendix 2), and Progress on Committee Resolutions (Appendix 3) had been attached to the report.

The Scrutiny Coordinator reported upon changes to the work programme since its preparation and members discussed the amendments with officers and raised a number of issues they wished to scrutinise in future. The committee confirmed the following additions –

- May – Restructuring of the Regeneration, Business Support and Tourism Services
- July – Restructuring of the Highways and Environmental Services and the scope of the report on the Condition of the County's Highways be widened to include work required in the aftermath of the snow event of March/April 2013
- September – Public Realm Strategy and Snow Clearance Arrangements
- October – Anti-Dog Fouling Campaign, and
- reaffirmed their earlier resolution for a follow up information report on the Play Sufficiency Assessment and action plan.

RESOLVED that, subject to the above, the forward work programme as detailed in Appendix 1 to the report be approved. **[Rhian Evans to action]**

9 FEEDBACK FROM COMMITTEE REPRESENTATIVES

Councillor Joe Welch referred to his attendance at the recent School Standards Monitoring Group and was pleased to report that both schools discussed, Ysgol Glan Clwyd, St. Asaph and Ysgol Clwydd Offa, Prestatyn were performing well.

Councillor Rhys Hughes referred to his association with Deeside College advising that the merger with Yale College was progressing well. It was noted that Deeside College Group's (Coleg Cumbria) current and future development would be considered by Partnerships Scrutiny Committee in September.

RESOLVED that the verbal reports be received and noted.

The meeting concluded at 12.05 p.m.