

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE COMMUNITY, ENVIRONMENT AND LEISURE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE HELD IN COUNCIL CHAMBER, CIVIC OFFICES ANGEL STREET BRIDGEND CF31 4WB ON WEDNESDAY, 27 JANUARY 2016 AT 2.00 PM

Present

Councillor JC Spanswick – Chairperson

CA Green
DRW Lewis
R Williams

RM James
JR McCarthy

RD Jenkins
G Phillips

CL Jones
KJ Watts

Officers:

Rachel Keepins Democratic Services Officer - Scrutiny
Andrew Rees Senior Democratic Services Officer - Committees
Kevin Stephens Democratic Services Assistant

Invitees:

Councillor H Williams Cabinet Member Communities
Mark Shepherd Corporate Director Communities
Satwant Pryce Head of Regeneration and Development
Zak Shell Head of Neighbourhood Services
Robert Hughes – Senior Solicitor
Gareth Davies – Director of Development, Coastal Housing Group

34. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from the following Members:

Councillor DK Edwards – Other Council business
Councillor JH Tildesley MBE – Unwell.

35. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

36. FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME UPDATE

The Scrutiny Officer presented a report which detailed the items to be considered at the next meeting of the Committee to be held on 23 March 2016 and the invitees due to attend. She requested the Committee consider items for inclusion on the Committee's Forward Work Programme and email the Scrutiny Team with potential items.

The Corporate Parenting Champion informed the Committee that he would not be seeking re-nomination as the Committee's Corporate Parenting Champion due to his potential future Council commitments. The Chairperson thanked Councillor Jenkins for fulfilling the role of Corporate Parenting Champion and requested members of the Committee consider a new nomination of Corporate Parenting Champion at the appropriate time.

Conclusions:

- (1) Noted the topics to be considered at its meeting on 23 March 2016 and the invitees to attend to attend the meeting;
- (2) That an officer from Social Services be requested to attend the meeting of the Committee on 23 March 2016 to inform the Committee of the progress of B-leaf as part of the Cultural Partnership Project.

37. VIBRANT AND VIABLE PLACES

The Scrutiny Officer introduced a report which provided the Committee with information on the delivery of the Vibrant and Viable Places programme (VVP).

The Head of Regeneration and Planning reported on the delivery of the VVP scheme together with an outline of the challenges of delivering a major project in a town centre. She stated that a grant of £5.98m had been secured from the VVP programme which provides an opportunity to support the evolution of Bridgend town centre, bringing more people to live in the centre, to create vibrancy, footfall, innovation and economic growth.

The Head of Regeneration and Planning informed the Committee the VVP programme comprised the following elements:

- Rhiw Gateway
- Homes in Town
- New parking provision
- Disposal of Council owned land
- Business Improvement District
- Townscape Heritage Initiative
- Redevelopment of 11 Nolton Street

The Head of Regeneration and Planning informed the Committee that substantial progress had been made with piling currently taking place at the Rhiw Gateway site. She stated there is a Delivery Plan and Risk Register for the project and a Development Agreement signed with Coastal Housing Group and a programme manager allocated to the scheme. The Head of Regeneration and Planning also informed the Committee that as tenders for the development had come in at a higher cost than anticipated a value engineering exercise had been undertaken to bring the project into line with available funding. An amended scheme had resulted in a two month delay to a start being made on site. The Head of Regeneration and Planning informed the Committee that work was being undertaken with Welsh Government officials to find the most suitable means to ensure there was no under spend at year end as it was not possible to carry forward funding into the next year. Work was being undertaken on options ii and iii in the report, in order to safeguard the drawdown of grant.

The Head of Regeneration and Planning informed the Committee of progress made to date on the Homes in Town project which would result in properties being converted in the town centre. Discussions were taking place with the Welsh Government on the potential to use the Council's capital allocation against a town centre scheme under the proposed Building for the Future Programme, should take up of the Homes in Town project remain problematic.

The Committee questioned the effect on usage of Shopmobility following its relocation to the Brackla Multi Storey Car Park. The Head of Regeneration and Planning informed the Committee that she would provide the Committee with data on usage of

Shopmobility which would be looked at in line with footfall in the town centre. Usage of Shopmobility had however fluctuated since the relocation of Shopmobility.

The Committee referred to the need for amendments having to be made to the Rhiw Gateway project and questioned the risk attached to not drawing down funding and what physical changes have been made to the scheme. The Director of Development Coastal Housing Group informed the Committee that several areas in relation to the value engineering exercise had been considered as it did not want to compromise the development and wanted to avoid the need to re-apply for planning consent. He stated that an example of value engineering was the frame of the building which had been constructed in a more cost effective way. In relation to the housing element of the development, boiler specifications and kitchen finishes had been reviewed. He stated that uppermost was the need to avoid delaying the process of construction. The Head of Regeneration and Planning informed the Committee that following the value engineering exercise there would no longer be painted finishes on all walls and pillars in the new car park and there would be less drainage gullies. She stated that there was a need to ensure that the vision for the car park was not comprised as Secure By Design had requirements in relation to the CCTV equipment at the car park. She stated that car parking spaces would be wider and in line with current parking standards. The Director of Development Coastal Housing Group informed the Committee that the project had been commenced in the autumn with the car park taking 12 months to construct and handed over in the latter part of 2016 or the early part of 2017. It was envisaged the residential units would be handed over in 18 months. The Head of Regeneration and Planning also informed the Committee that most of the value engineering changes made were in relation to the choice of materials used and that one lift would be provided in the residential development as opposed to the two lifts originally envisaged.

The Committee referred to the progress on the Homes in Town project and questioned what would happen to the 5 properties which had proven to be unsuitable for development. The Head of Regeneration and Planning informed the Committee that the conversion of properties in the town centre for residential is difficult due to noise problems from late night economy establishments due to the high cost of conversion to insulate properties against noise. She stated that a report is to be commissioned to introduce measures to combat noise in order that landlords did not incur abortive costs. She informed the Committee of the need to resolve the issue of noise in the town centre preventing development from taking place as residential development was part of the match funding package.

The Committee questioned in relation to the YBC site identified for disposal the number of 1 bedroom properties to be developed and whether local builders were given the opportunity to development sites. The Head of Regeneration and Planning informed the Committee that it was unlikely that 1 bedroom properties would be developed on the YBC site but she would provide the Committee with information on the configuration of the properties to be developed. She stated that sites are advertised on the open market which would be more attractive to the larger house builders. Local builders would be more successful in developing smaller residential site. Sites are disposed of on the open market, however sites are occasionally sold off market but prior to such sales, sites are valued by the District Valuer.

The Committee questioned whether the affordable housing policy of providing 25% of properties for new developments had been applied in relation to the Homes in Town project due to their closeness to the town centre and rail and bus stations. The Head of Regeneration and Planning informed the Committee that the affordable housing is applied but the requirements of the developer are considered for each development and developers are required to produce an appraisal for their site. She stated that residential

schemes take time to work up with developers and policies were not overturned. The Committee considered that sites for residential development should be disposed to Registered Social Landlords where possible. The Director of Development Coastal Housing Group informed the Committee that RSLs would welcome off market disposals but they would need to look at the viability of developing affordable housing on some sites. The Cabinet Member Communities informed the Committee that the Council is in the position of having to release assets where possible, funds from which were re-invested in the School Modernisation Programme. He informed the Committee that the Local Housing Strategy was currently the subject of consultation and he welcomed Members to take part in the consultation.

The Committee referred to the progress being made in developing the Business Improvement District and expressed concern that a significant part of the business community could be omitted, namely businesses in parts of Tremains Road and Eweny Road as they are located outside the BID boundary. The Head of Regeneration and Planning informed the Committee that the boundaries for the BID had been determined by the traders themselves. The traders who are part of the BID would also determine a levy based on their rateable value in order for the BID to make decisions. It was likely that the ballot for the BID would take place in March 2016.

The Committee referred to funding being concentrated in towns and questioned whether villages would benefit from external funding. The Head of Regeneration and Planning informed the Committee that regeneration funding for villages is available through the Rural Development Programme whilst Bridges into Work is available for people who are long term unemployed. She stated that most of the County Borough was covered by some form of regeneration funding.

The Committee questioned whether health and safety matters would be considered prior to any re-development of 11 Nolton Street. The Director of Development Coastal Housing Group informed the Committee that Coastal had purchased the property in 2013 and prior to any re-development due diligence, ground testing and appropriate checks would take place.

The Head of Regeneration and Planning summarised the process of developing a major project on site at the Rhiw Gateway in that noise levels have had to be dealt with, although noise from the site was within acceptable limits. She stated that the presence of trees on site could de-stabilise the site and consent was required to cut down the trees. A bat survey had to be undertaken and consultation taken place with Bridgend Town Council and the Civic Trust. She informed the Committee that costs had increased due to the presence of trees which had been removed prior to the commencement of piling. Fire marshals had to be placed when the walkway from the multi storey car park to the Rhiw Shopping Centre was taken down. She stated that keeping neighbours and traders happy had been a difficult and complicated process to manage.

The Cabinet Member Communities placed on record his thanks to the Head of Regeneration and Planning and the Regeneration team in securing the Vibrant and Viable Places funding and for taking the project through to fruition.

Conclusions

1. In light of the proposals for new housing developments at various sites across the County Borough, the Committee wished to raise the need for the Authority to ensure that developers strictly adhere to the policy for affordable housing provision.

2. In relation to the disposal of Council land, the Committee stressed the importance of ensuring that the right price is gained for the land and that the Authority does not lose out financially in any way.
3. The Committee agreed to progress this item further, adding it to their forward work programme for next year to focus on the following:
 - Rhiw Gateway – late 2016/early 2017 - Measure of Success - impact on the town centre, footfall, how people have moved into the town centre etc.
 - Homes in Town – revisit in 6-7 months' time to consider how the risks, issues and mitigating measures have been progressed.

Additional Information

1. The Committee asked to receive the figures for the usage levels for the Shop Mobility since its change in location from the Rhiw car par to Brackla car park.
2. The Committee asked for information as to how many of the converted town centre homes would be one bedroom.
3. Whether RSLs have been approached regarding their interest in purchasing Council land as they tend to have a higher allocation of affordable housing than private investors.

38. URGENT ITEMS

There were no urgent items

39. EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC

RESOLVED: That under Section 100A (4) of the Local Government Act 1972 as amended by the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) (Wales) Order 2007, the public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following items of business as they contained exempt information as defined in Paragraph 14 of Part 4 and Paragraph 21 of Part 5 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, as amended by the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) (Wales) Order 2007.

Following the application of the public interest test it was resolved that pursuant to the Act referred to above, to consider the under-mentioned item in private with the public being excluded from the meeting as it would involve the disclosure of exempt information as stated above.

40. PROCUREMENT OF WASTE MANAGEMENT SERVICES AT THE MATERIALS RECOVERY AND ENERGY CENTRE, CRYMLYN BURROWS, (MREC)

The meeting closed at 5.00 pm