
CORPORATE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE, 07.03.13

Present: Councillor Selwyn Griffiths (elected to chair the meeting in the absence of the Chairman and the Vice-chairman);

Councillors: Lesley Day, Elwyn Edwards, Aled Evans, Jason Humphreys, Eryl Jones-Williams, June Marshall, Dafydd Meurig, Michael Sol Owen, Mair Rowlands, Gareth Thomas and Eirwyn Williams.

Officers present: Gareth James (Member Support and Scrutiny Manager), Nicola Day (Corporate Procurement Manager), Ann Roberts (Assistant Performance Improvement Officer – Scrutiny) and Eirian Roberts (Member Support and Scrutiny Officer).

Apologies: Councillors Gwynfor Edwards, Trevor Edwards, Gweno Glyn, Simon Glyn, Charles W. Jones and Dyfrig Jones.

1. DECLARATION OF PERSONAL INTEREST

Councillor Gareth Thomas declared a personal interest in item 5 on the agenda, parts (b) and (ch), because his company, TJB Cymru Ltd., had carried out work for Menter a Busnes and Blaenau Ymlaen.

The member was of the opinion that it was not a prejudicial interest, and he did not withdraw from the meeting during the discussion on the item.

2. MINUTES

The Chair signed the minutes of the previous meeting of this committee held on 31 January, 2013 as a true record.

3. SUSTAINABLE PROCUREMENT POLICY

Cabinet Member: Councillor John Wynn Jones

The following were welcomed to the meeting to submit observations and evidence:-

- (a) Professor Dermot Cahill, Director of the Winning in Tendering Project, School of Law, Bangor University.
- (b) Carys Griffiths, Tendering Manager, Business Wales.
- (c) Dafydd Jones, Dinas Contracting Ltd., Penrhyndeudraeth.
- (ch) Councillor Mandy Williams-Davies, Blaenau Ffestiniog Regeneration Project.

During his presentation, Professor Dermot Cahill elaborated on his work and involvement with the Council with regard to the Winning in Tendering Project. Carys Griffiths explained the role of Business Wales in respect of providing practical assistance to small and medium-sized businesses to win contracts in the private and public sector, and David Jones gave an outline of the situation from a contractor's perspective. Councillor Mandy Williams-Davies then provided an outline of the background and objectives of the Blaenau Ffestiniog Regeneration Project, explaining how this scheme had helped the town's businesses and created employment opportunities.

At the end of each presentation, the members were given an opportunity to ask questions and offer observations. The following main points were highlighted:-

It was noted that:

- The officers of the procurement service should be thanked for the progress made over the past two years in implementing the Sustainable Procurement Policy.
- Work should be undertaken urgently to substantially simplify the current tendering documents, ensuring that the documentation was fit for purpose and that it did not contain unnecessary information and did not request unnecessary information.
- Work should continue on amending the SQUID to take into account current and proportionate risk levels in terms of turnover thresholds and insurance.
- Central / corporate procurement arrangements should be developed further, ensuring there were sufficient resources for delivery.
- It should be ensured that full and appropriate feedback was provided to companies who had failed to win a tender(s).
- It should be ensured that a clause was included in the tender and the agreement noting that successful companies were required to pay subcontractors sooner.
- The Welsh Local Government Association should be lobbied to introduce this element generally across Wales.
- Detailed work should be undertaken to assess the numbers, situations and reasons as to why companies who won contracts tended to sub-contract rather than employ, aiming to increase the number of jobs being created.
- Discussions should be held with the Welsh Government to see how the Council could raise awareness amongst businesses of the potential to receive a higher percentage of the Public Spending in Wales.
- Prospective clients should be encouraged and guided to complete the SQUID electronically, so that companies were not forced to waste long periods of time re-entering information for different tenders.
- Following the success of the collaborative work to form tenders jointly with local partnerships in Blaenau Ffestiniog, this arrangement should be developed with local partnerships when opportunities arose.

It was also noted:-

- That it was regrettable that Business Wales was not allowed to advertise its support to tender service directly. The Member Support and Scrutiny Manager was asked to send Carys Griffiths' contact details to the members, and it was suggested to include a reference to the service under the 'Procurement' section on the Council's website.
- Concern was expressed that Blaenau Ffestiniog Town Council had not joined One Voice Wales, as this meant that the rest of Meirionnydd was not aware of what was going on in the town. Also, the fact that there was no representative from Blaenau Ffestiniog on the Meirionnydd Access Group meant that members from other areas had had to go to the town to give their opinions on the regeneration plans. Councillor Mandy Williams-Davies agreed to take these messages back to the Town Council.

RESOLVED to form a series of draft recommendations to the Cabinet Member, based on the conclusions of the above discussion, and to submit them to the next Preparatory Meeting for approval.

**4. RURAL-URBAN AGENDA
Cabinet Member – Councillor Dyfed Edwards**

Submitted

- (a) the report of the Member Support and Scrutiny Manager asking the committee to agree the brief for the Scrutiny Investigation – the Rural-Urban Agenda.
- (b) notes of the informal meeting of the Scrutiny Investigation Group – Rural Agenda which had been held on 20 February, 2013.

During the discussion the following main observations were noted:-

- The investigation should focus mainly on the services provided across the Council, and how they were provided in the most urban and rural areas.
- The transportation system should be looked at, as those living in rural areas had to travel to access services.
- As public transport was now more or less out of the Council's hands, the Investigation should look at whether there were better ways of providing the service e.g. community transport provided by the third sector, possibly.
- Every area had different problems, and everyone could learn from each other.
- Rural and urban areas also had common problems e.g. community transport would also be useful in the towns as well as in the countryside.
- The investigation should not create a 'them' and 'us' situation, and it was crucial that everyone worked together for the benefit of all the residents of the county.
- Gritten Management's report on a Study of Energy Use in Aberdaron, Botwnnog, Tudweiliog and Enlli summarised all the problems in the countryside i.e. higher costs than the national average – the majority in fuel and transport poverty; inefficient housing and heating systems, having to use cars; dependence on more costly fuels and paying more for them – lack of competition between providers in the rural areas; dependence on expensive transport to address basic needs.

It was noted that point 4 on the bottom of the first page of the group meeting notes required correcting to read as follows:-

"4. Social Isolation – it was noted that much was happening in this area throughout Gwynedd already."

Referring to the comment in the notes that a Broadband work programme existed across Gwynedd, it was noted that the Council's statements to the press did not refer to the fact that Broadband would be extended to the villages.

RESOLVED to note that the discussion of the informal meeting of the Scrutiny Investigation Group – Rural Agenda had formed a basis for commencing the work of looking at the Council's services, the options and the alternative ways of providing them, and to agree with the following direction for the investigation:-

- (i) Use information from the latest Census as a basis for the investigation.**
- (ii) Discuss with the Council Leader, Mantell Gwynedd and others.**
- (iii) Hold the meetings of the Scrutiny Investigation Group in Penrhyndeudraeth.**

5. ANNUAL WORK PROGRAMME

Submitted – the latest version of the work programme.

Referring to item 7 on the work programme – Sustainable Procurement, and the decision of this committee on 31 January to discuss in this meeting the type of working group that would be suitable to look into the field, the Member Support and Scrutiny Manager noted that the working group should either be a working group to support the Cabinet Member's

work, or a scrutiny investigation. As this committee had already established another scrutiny investigation, and following a discussion with the Head of Strategic and Improvement Department, it was suggested to establish a scrutiny investigation into the procurement field, but for this to take place later on in the year, due to the commitment required in terms of time and resources. Very useful initial work had been undertaken at this meeting, and the aim was to develop that for the period from June onwards, and to place an item on the agenda of the meeting of 25 April for agreeing the brief.

It was noted that the members no longer received information on what the Council did to attract businesses and employment to the county, and it was suggested to add this as an item on the work programme.

RESOLVED

- (a) To place Sustainable Procurement on the agenda of the meeting on 25 April.**
- (b) To add an item on the work programme for receiving information on what the Council does to attract businesses and employment to the county.**

At the end of the meeting, it was noted that Ystafell Dwyrdd was an ideal location for holding scrutiny sessions, and the officers were asked to arrange the next meeting at the same location.

The meeting commenced at 2.15pm and concluded at 4.50pm.