
COMMUNITIES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 7/12/17

PRESENT:

COUNCILLORS: Glyn Daniels, Elwyn Edwards, Peter Garlick, Simon Glyn, Annwen Hughes, Aled W Jones, Berwyn Parry Jones, Keith Jones, Kevin Morris Jones, Linda Morgan, Edgar Wyn Owen, Mike Stevens, Gruffydd Williams and Owain Williams.

OFFICERS: Gareth James (Member Support and Scrutiny Manager) and Lowri Haf Evans (Member Support Officer).

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:

- a) In relation to item 5 on the agenda - Dafydd Meurig (Cabinet Member - Environment), Dafydd Wyn Williams (Head of Environment Department), Meirion Williams (Senior Manager – Transportation and Street Care) and Wyn Williams (Environment Manager).

In relation to item 6 on the agenda - Dafydd Meurig (Cabinet Member - Environment), Dafydd Wyn Williams (Head of Environment Department), Gareth Jones (Senior Planning and Environment Manager), Nia Haf Davies (Joint Planning Policy Unit Manager) and Geraint Owen (Head of Democratic Services).

In relation to item 7 on the agenda - Dafydd Meurig (Cabinet Member - Environment) Dafydd Wyn Williams (Head of Environment Department) and Gareth Jones (Senior Planning and Environment Manager).

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Councillors Stephen Churchman, Catrin Wager and Gethin Glyn Williams

2. DECLARATION OF PERSONAL INTEREST

None to note

3. URGENT ITEMS

None to note

4. MINUTES

The minutes of the previous meeting of this committee, held on 10.10.2017, were accepted as a true record of the meeting.

5. REVIEW OF RIGHTS OF WAY IMPROVEMENT PLAN

- a) Submitted - a report by the Cabinet Member, providing an update on the progress made with the work of preparing a review of the Rights of Way

Improvement Plan. It was reported that the work of preparing the Improvement Plan had been divided into two parts, namely to review and prepare an Action Statement. When reviewing, it was considered to evaluate to what extent the objectives had been achieved in the previous plan, assess the network's current condition and discover to what extent the rights of way would satisfy the public's requirements. In order to establish a picture of the current situation in terms of the network's condition and to seek the public's opinion, a public consultation had been held by preparing a digital questionnaire. It was added that 1,386 valid responses had been received, which was very encouraging.

It was explained that the draft action statement (which was included with the report) attempted to identify the main work themes and the actions for the Rights of Way Improvement Plan, and that this would be the basis for preparing a detailed work programme. It was hoped to establish a realistic and attainable work programme in addition to avoiding some of the weaknesses of the previous plan.

b) During the discussion the following observations were noted:

- The programme was challenging, given the Council's savings plan
- There was a lack of information about the access available to the public
- Did the budget respond to the priorities of the questionnaire's respondents?
- It was difficult to believe that no maps of the paths were available on the Council's website
- Has consideration been given to further plans for the future should the *precept* of the Community Councils reduce or come to an end?

In response to a question regarding the contribution of the National Park and the Coast Path to the network, it was emphasised that Natural Resources Wales contributed £80k per year but there were no detailed figures on the National Park's expenditure.

In response to an observation regarding the work programme themes' priorities, it was emphasised that aspects of each theme would receive attention, but that this would depend on the available resources.

In response to an observation regarding the path categories and whether priority should be given to category 1 and what would happen to category 4, the Cabinet Member emphasised that it would be difficult to keep a balance between the categories and there was no intention of ignoring category 4. It was added that the Unit would continue to investigate, collaborate and attempt to keep access open.

In response to an observation should there be obstructions on the lowest categories, it was emphasised that the information needed to be shared in order to attempt to resolve the obstructions. It was added that it would be the landowner's responsibility to restore gates and stiles.

In response to an observation regarding developing maps on the website, it was highlighted that discussions had been held and that the support of the Council's Website Department was needed in order to implement further. It was noted that many had asked for the service and therefore the hope was to develop maps in future.

In response to an observation regarding the possibility of Community Councils failing to cope with additional responsibilities and whether there was statutory legislation noting that the Council was required to ensure that it maintained all paths, it was reported that it was the Council's responsibility to ensure access. Nevertheless, it was emphasised that category 1 and 2 would be prioritised, unless there was sufficient evidence to show that more use was made of category 3 and 4.

An observation was received that it would not be possible to depend on the Community Councils to do the work as they had increasing responsibilities.

In response to an observation that should the *precept* of Community Councils to maintain paths be reduced, and if a further plan was in place, it was noted that the Department had attempted to safeguard the Community Councils' money, but it would be difficult to know how much money would be available in future. Nevertheless, it was added that the Unit had expert staff who would be offering training, use of equipment and support, and the need to consider the possibility of collaborating with community plans such as Tref Werdd. It was added that there was no money in reserve, but the categories' money would need to be used and to prepare the Community Councils to do the work. It was also noted that the plan was reviewed every two years to assess whether the plan was too ambitious.

- c) The report was accepted.

6. SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING GUIDANCE

- a) Submitted - for information, the report of the Cabinet Member, setting the background and purpose of the Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) in addition to information based on the policies for SPG: Maintaining and Creating Unique and Sustainable Communities. It was explained that the SPG gave detailed and clear guidance on how the policies of the Local Development Plan, which had been adopted by Gwynedd Council and Anglesey Council in July 2017, were being used. It was added that the Plan's various policies had an important role to play when supporting, maintaining and creating unique and sustainable urban and rural communities, by ensuring that Councils would meet their statutory duties to promote sustainable development.

The Full Council's decision on 28 July 2017 was to prioritise SPG Maintaining and Creating Unique and Sustainable Communities when preparing the Development Plan guidelines. Attention was drawn to the elements considered to be essential for unique and sustainable communities, and the Development Plan's strategic objective involved well-being and the Welsh language and culture - it was added that including Policy PS1 set a local policy framework when considering these aspects.

Submitted - the draft timetable that had been set to prepare the SPG, outlining the importance of having the opportunity to scrutinise beforehand, in accordance with the Committee's wishes (it was noted that the timetable had been adapted to address this).

In response to an observation regarding the use of NCT20, it was noted that there was more detail in the Local Development Plan and the guidance, once

they had been developed, would have a much stronger basis than what was in NCT20, which was limited on some requirements. If an Inspector sided with the NCT20 viewpoint, the Senior Planning Manager noted that he would be confident to support the stance on the guidance and not on NCT20, because the decision would be based on recent evidence. It was suggested that there was a need to ensure that applicants were aware of this.

The information was accepted.

- b) The Head of Democratic Services submitted a draft brief of the Planning and the Welsh Language Scrutiny Investigation in response to the Committee's desire to scrutinise that the consultation process on the SPG - Planning and the Welsh Language, had been inclusive. He added that the Scrutiny Forum had agreed to prioritise to the investigation and that a resource had been identified to support the investigation. It was added that initial discussions had been held on the brief with the relevant officers.

It was highlighted that the investigation would report back to the Communities Scrutiny Committee and to the Joint Planning Policy Committee. It was reported that an application had been submitted for Anglesey Council to jointly scrutinise with Gwynedd, but no response had been received. It was noted that up to five members were needed to participate in the investigation, including one member of the Language Committee.

A request was made for the Joint Planning Committee's roles, and whether they had a statutory role of scrutinisation by the Panel.

- c) Resolved to accept the brief.
- ch) Councillors Seimon Glyn, Gruffydd Williams and Owain Williams were nominated in addition to Aled Evans (Language Committee).

7. PLANNING SCRUTINY INVESTIGATION UPDATE

- a) A progress report was received by the Cabinet Member following a scrutiny investigation into the field of planning. The main findings of the investigation were highlighted and an update was given on the recommendations submitted in March 2017.
- b) In response to an observation regarding the recommendation to modify the thresholds of the Gwynedd Delegation Plan, it was reported that the work had now received the support of the Committee Members, with the intention of proceeding to formalise the modifications through the appropriate procedure. It was added that there was an intention for the delegation plan to be submitted to the Full Council in March 2018.
- c) The report was accepted.

The meeting commenced at 10.30 am and concluded at 12.00 pm

CHAIRMAN