
COMMUNITIES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE, 04-09-12

PRESENT: Councillor Eric M. Jones (Chairman);
Councillor Angela Russell (Vice-chair).

Councillors:- Gwynfor Edwards, Annwen Hughes, Louise Hughes, Dilwyn Morgan, Tudor Owen, Caerwyn Roberts, Mike Stevens, Mandy Williams-Davies, Gethin Glyn Williams, Gruffydd Williams and Eurig Wyn

ALSO PRESENT: Vera Jones (Members' Manager – Democratic Service), Gareth James (Members' Support and Scrutiny Manager), Ioan Hughes, (Members' Support and Scrutiny Officer) and Councillor John Wyn Jones, (Cabinet Member – Economy).

APOLOGIES: Councillors Stephen Churchman, Nigel Pickavance and Robert J. Wright,

1. DECLARATION OF PERSONAL INTEREST

No declarations of personal interest were received from any member present.

MINUTES

The Chairman signed the minutes of the previous meeting of this Committee held on 26 June 2012, as a true record.

2. ANNUAL WORK PROGRAMME

a) The Members' Support and Scrutiny Manager submitted information regarding the latest version of this Scrutiny Committee's Annual Work Programme. He noted that the matters raised reflected the discussions held in the 'workshop' on 26 June for programming the work of the Committee for 2012-13

b) He confirmed that the document was a 'live document'. It was published on the Council's website, providing the public, in accordance with the Welsh Government Measure, with an opportunity to keep an eye on the work programme.

c) Members were given another opportunity to consider the contents of the work programme so that matters could be added or removed.

RESOLVED:

i) to add the following matters to the list of priorities:

- **The future of traditional village shops, banks and post offices;**
- **Wind turbines;**
- **Marine conservation zones;**
- **Dog fouling and the reluctance of owners to keep their dogs under control in public areas.**

ii) that information regarding the current arrangements, in relation to methods of dealing with dog fouling difficulties is submitted at the Preparatory Meeting of this Scrutiny Committee.

3. REVIEW OF HOUSING SUPPLY AND AFFORDABILITY

The Cabinet Member for Planning, Councillor John Wyn Jones and the Housing Policy Strategic Manager were present for this item.

a) Further to the written report, the Cabinet Members and the officer responded appropriately to questions and observations submitted by the members and the following main points were noted:

- The Cabinet Member noted his desire to support those who were in work, but who did not earn a salary that was high enough to get a mortgage and also those who had insufficient amount of points to be placed high up on the waiting list;
- A Housing Options Team would be established on 10 September 2012 that would create one system of allocating houses;
- The Housing Options Team would be located within the Council but would operate on behalf of the housing associations.
- The aforementioned procedure was established under legislation but consideration would also be given to local connections. In addition, the procedure was based on the necessity for the person obtaining a house to be in need;
- It was intended to submit information regarding the aforementioned procedure in a meeting of the Area Committees;
- The new benefits procedure could possibly strengthen efforts to introduce changes so that tenants would move into more appropriate houses and avoid situations where individuals could live in houses of substantial size;
- The Homelessness Act to ensure that a thorough inspection would be held into all the circumstances before any individual could be considered to be truly homeless;
- The procedure of 'median rent' to offer young people the opportunity to buy rather than rent their homes;
- The co-operative houses had proven to be a success in some areas and this field could be investigated further.
- The possibility of making full use of currently sub-standard houses within the private sector should be investigated and this could be undertaken with loans rather than grants.
- Gwynedd Council mortgage deposit loan scheme had been established and it was intended to be operational by October this year. The scheme would include conditions in relation to local connections;
- Work was being undertaken to bring empty homes back into use, the aim must be to obtain regular improvement;
- A second Empty Homes Officer had been appointed by Gwynedd Council recently; and this reflected the intention to ensure improvement;
- The effects of the 106 Legal Condition, attached to planning permission, needed to be investigated in detail so that young families could be supported and endeavour to establish a procedure to ensure the condition did not create difficulties in relation to the release of a mortgage.

b) The Cabinet Member suggested that this Scrutiny Committee could hold an investigation into the housing field so that they could make recommendations to the Cabinet.

c) The Chairman thanked the Cabinet Member and the Housing Strategic Policy Manager for attending the meeting and for their recommendations.

Recommendations:

1. The Cabinet Member for Planning was asked to submit details on the following to the meetings of the Area Committees:
 - a) General Housing List and the Housing Options Team
2. Investigate further the potential of developing:
 - Co-operative and Corporate houses;
 - Improve houses in the private sector with loans as well as grants;
 - The impact of the 106 Legal Condition so that it did not create difficulties to release a mortgage.
3. The Cabinet Member for Customer Care was asked to provide a list of successions on farms owned by the Council;
4. Members of the Scrutiny Committee were to consider holding a Scrutiny Investigation or working group at the next Preparatory Meeting to support the Cabinet Member for Planning.

4. BANGOR PRIDE

- a) The Members' Support and Scrutiny Manager outlined the work involved with holding a scrutiny investigation into the Pride of Bangor Scheme.
- b) It was emphasised that there would be a need for the members of the Leading Group to work to a strict schedule and they would need to provide total commitment in order to complete the investigation in detail.
- c) It was explained that full consideration would be given to the Plan's successes and failures along with the possibility of extending it to other parts of Gwynedd, including rural areas.

RESOLVED:

- a) **To establish a Scrutiny Investigation into the Bangor Pride Scheme;**
- b) **To elect the following members to be members of the Leading Group:**
Councillors: Eric M. Jones, Mandy Williams – Davies, Gwynfor Edwards, Nigel Pickavance, Dilwyn Morgan and Gruffydd Williams.

The meeting commenced at 10.00am and concluded at 11.55am