

15 September, 2010.

LLANELLI RURAL COUNCIL

Minute Nos: 200 – 209

At a Meeting of the **POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE** of the Llanelli Rural Council held at the Council Chamber, Vauxhall Buildings, Vauxhall, Llanelli, on Wednesday, 15 September, 2010, at 4.45 p.m.

Present: Cllr. D. J. Davies (Chairman)

Cllrs.

T. D. Bowen	H. J. Evans
M. V. Davies	T. Rh. Ifan
S. L. Davies	A. G. Morgan
T. Devichand	B. C. M. Reynolds
A. C. Thomas	

200. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs. T. J. Jones (Cllr. B. C. M. Reynolds deputising) and V. R. Thomas.

201. MEMBERS' DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Cllr. D. J. Davies declared a personal and prejudicial interest in Minute Nos. 203 and 204 as he was Vice-Chairman, Housing and Public Protection Committee, and a member of the Licensing Committee, Carmarthenshire County Council.

202. CONSULTATION ON PROPOSED LOCAL GOVERNMENT (WALES) MEASURE 2010

A Consultation Document was received from the Chairman, Legislation Committee No. 3, National Assembly for Wales, which called for evidence on the general principles of the proposed Local Government (Wales) Measure – this being a piece of law made by the Assembly which had a similar effect to an Act of Parliament.

The proposed Measure sought to:-

- (1) broaden and increase participation in local government by permitting steps which would help remove barriers and disincentives to standing for election to local councils;
- (2) enable the review and improvement of the governance structures introduced through the Local Government Act 2000 so that they would better suit the circumstances of local government in Wales;

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- (3) enhance the role of non-executive ('backbench') local authority councillors in the scrutiny of local services;
- (4) develop and strengthen the role of community councils in Wales, including enabling them to deliver a wider range of services and actions locally as well as to increase the effectiveness of their representational role and their ability to work in partnership with other bodies;
- (5) reform the system for setting allowances for councillors;
- (6) allow the Welsh Ministers to issue statutory guidance on collaboration between local authorities, and between them and other bodies.

The role of Legislation Committee No. 3 was to consider and report on the general principles of the proposed Measure and, in doing so, had agreed to work within the following framework:-

To consider:

- (1) the need for a proposed Measure to deliver the stated objectives of strengthening the structures and working of local government in Wales at all levels and ensuring that local councils reached out to, and engaged with, all sectors of the communities they served;
- (2) whether the proposed Measure achieved its stated objectives;
- (3) the key provisions set out in the proposed Measure and whether they were appropriate to deliver its objectives;
- (4) potential barriers to the implementation of the key provisions and whether the proposed Measure took account of them;
- (5) the views of stakeholders who would have to work with the new arrangements.

During the ensuing discussion, reference was made to the need to encourage and support younger representatives.

Correspondence received from Carl Sargeant, AM, was also circulated. The writer informed that he had introduced the Proposed Local Government (Wales) Measure 2010 into the National Assembly. Reference was also made to the valuable role which One Voice Wales had to play.

Members having objected to the tone of the letter referencing One Voice Wales, it was

RESOLVED that

- (1) the Clerk forward a response to the Chairman, Legislation Committee No. 3, National Assembly for Wales; and that
- (2) a letter conveying Members' objection to the content of said correspondence be forwarded to Carl Sargeant, AM.

The Vice-Chairman of Committee, Cllr. T. D. Bowen Chaired the meeting for the following two items.

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203. REVIEW OF ACCESS TO SOCIAL HOUSING POLICY

Cllr. D. J. Davies declared a personal and prejudicial interest in the following item as he was Vice-Chairman, Housing and Public Protection Committee, Carmarthenshire County Council. Cllr. Davies withdrew from the meeting before discussion began.

Correspondence was received from the Housing Options Project Officer, Carmarthenshire County Council, which informed that a review of the Access to Social Housing Policy for the allocation of Council and Housing Association properties within Carmarthenshire, was being undertaken. Comments on the draft Policy were invited via a questionnaire.

Members found that the document was easy to read and was fair. The changes to the proposed Policy were understood, however, it was felt that the following ought to be included:-

- (1) the next review date should be indicated on the draft to underline that the Policy was under constant review;
- (2) reference be made to tenants running up bad debts against social housing properties and the implications for new tenants attempting to receive credit against a black-listed property.

During discussion, Cllr. H. J. Evans withdrew from the meeting.

Members focussed on the section regarding applications being suspended or removed from the housing choice register. One of the criteria for which was, "having refused two reasonable offers of accommodation within 12 months" and it was questioned as to who decided what was a reasonable offer. Members quoted examples of the general quality of the housing stock, particularly if a property was not fit for purpose as a compelling reason for refusing a tenancy. Members stated through their own experience of the current system, that interpretation differed from housing officer to housing officer, thereby there was an inconsistency in making assessments on what constituted a reasonable offer. In view of this, it was felt that there was possibly a case for an independent arbitration panel to be established in order that appeals could be heard if housing applicants found themselves in danger of being removed from the housing choice register because of their refusal to accept two reasonable offers of accommodation within 12 months.

RESOLVED that Members' comments and suggestions be forwarded to the Housing Services, Social Care, Health and Housing Department, Carmarthenshire County Council.

**204. LICENSING ACT 2003 –
REVIEW OF LICENSING POLICY**

Cllr. D. J. Davies declared a personal and prejudicial interest in the following item as he was a member of the Licensing Committee, Carmarthenshire County Council. Cllr. Davies had withdrawn from the meeting before discussion began.

A Licensing Policy Review Consultation Document 2010 and questionnaire were received from the Principal Licensing Officer, Public Protection, Carmarthenshire County Council, which outlined the Authority's approach to licensing Premises, Clubs, Temporary events and

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personal Licences. The current policy, which was adopted in January 2008, was due to be reviewed to ensure that it was up to date and reflected feedback from the local community that the statutory objectives were being met.

During discussion, Cllr. H. J. Evans returned to the meeting.

Members informed that, by attending local PACT meetings, information was available on the problem of superstores selling cheap alcohol. Members felt that more policing of various 'hotspots' of underage drinking within their own area was needed and it was also suggested that there was a need to refocus policing attention from the town centre to other areas.

The introduction of continental style late night availability of alcohol had not worked and reference was made to the fact that, in the past, license applications were dealt with by Magistrates' Courts and that these days, the issue of licenses was given more easily.

RESOLVED that a letter conveying Members' comments be forwarded instead of completing the questionnaire to the Principal Licensing Officer, Public Protection, Carmarthenshire County Council.

Cllr. Davies returned to Chair the remainder of the meeting.

205. JOINT WORKING

Correspondence received from the Leader, Carmarthenshire County Council, referred to the successful joint conference held in December 2009, and to the particular areas which the County Council was particularly keen to progress. These included winter maintenance issues, public conveniences, parks and playing fields, pavilions and changing rooms.

The writer made reference to an attached copy letter from Carl Sargeant, AM, regarding 'A Shared Community – guidance on relationship building measures and charters for unitary authorities and community and town councils'.

During discussion, Members were concerned at the cost and impracticability of sharing this Council's direct labour resource, free of charge, during times of emergency such as extreme weather conditions as it would have to address situations affecting delivery of its own services.

The maintenance of public conveniences was not a matter for this Council as there were no such facilities within its area.

The writer informed of the inequitable situation where some council taxpayers were contributing towards facilities i.e. parks, playing fields and pavilions/changing rooms, in other parts of the County which were not provided within their own area and that, because of the budget situation, the County Council was re-examining this area. It was thought that further dialogue was needed with local councils who might be better placed to undertake the management and small-scale maintenance of such facilities. Members referred to the financial implications of additional management and maintenance of such areas and a suggestion was made to set up review teams which could form a framework for public consultation on the delivery of services.

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RESOLVED that the correspondence be noted.

206. AREA PROPERTY REVIEW

An invitation was received from the Strategic Asset Manager, Carmarthenshire County Council, to attend an Area Review which gave an opportunity to influence the future use and provision of assets in Carmarthenshire. The Review was to be held on 27 September, 2010, at the Lliedi Suite, Selwyn Samuel Centre, Llanelli.

RESOLVED that the Clerk be authorised to attend and report to Members at a future meeting.

207. BIG LOTTERY ADVANTAGE PROGRAMME – FUNDING BID CONSULTATION

A letter and questionnaire were received from the Chief Officer, Age Concern Sir Gâr, informing that the organisation was leading a regional funding bid to the BIG Lottery Advantage programme for older people to provide a befriending service across Carmarthenshire, Ceredigion and Pembrokeshire. The organisation was also participating in an all Wales funding bid by Age Concerns to provide an all Wales advocacy service.

A request was therefore made of this Authority for its support by completing a questionnaire.

Members agreed that there was a need for an advocacy service and a befriending service in Carmarthenshire specifically for older people. A one stop shop facility was also supported, preferably in each of the main towns i.e. Llanelli, Carmarthen and Ammanford.

RESOLVED that the completed questionnaire be forwarded to the Chief Officer, Age Concern Sir Gâr.

208. PUBLIC BODIES (ADMISSION TO MEETINGS) ACT, 1960

RESOLVED that in view of the confidential nature of the business to be transacted, the following matter be considered in private and that the power of exclusion of the public under Section 1(2) of the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act, 1960 be exercised.

209. STAFFING MATTERS

Members were circulated with the report of the Deputy Clerk (Administration) informing of staffing matters.

RESOLVED that the report of the Deputy Clerk (Administration) be received and adopted.

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The Meeting concluded at 6.15 p.m.
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The afore-mentioned Minutes were declared to be a true record of the proceedings and signed by the Chairman presiding thereat and were, on 14 September, 2010, adopted by the Council.