

PARTNERSHIP AND REGENERATION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held on 21 November 2013

- PRESENT:** Councillor Derlwyn Rees Hughes (Chair)
Councillor Alun Wyn Mummery (Vice-Chair)
- Councillors John Griffith, Carwyn Jones, Raymond Jones, R LI Jones, Dylan Rees and Dafydd Rhys Thomas
- IN ATTENDANCE:** Councillor(s) Richard Dew, Aled Morris Jones, Victor Hughes, R G Parry OBE, J Arwel Roberts, P S Rogers, Alwyn Rowlands, Ieuan Williams
- APOLOGIES:** Councillor(s) W T Hughes and Richard Owain Jones
- ALSO PRESENT:** Director of Sustainable Development
Head of Service (Property)
Scrutiny Officer
Committee Services Manager
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1. DECLARATION OF INTEREST

Councillors P.S.Rogers and R.G.Parry,OBE declared an interest in the matter as they were both farming on Anglesey.

Councillor R.Dew Jones declared an interest in the matter as he was farming on Anglesey and had been a former member of the Anglesey Young Farmers Club.

Councillor A.Morris Jones declared an interest in the matter as he had been a former member of the Anglesey Young Farmers Club.

2. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

RESOLVED under Section 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, to exclude the press and public from the meeting during discussion on the following item on the grounds that it may involve the disclosure of exempt information as defined in Schedule 12A of the said Act and in the attached Public Interest Test.

3. MATTER REFERRED TO THE COMMITTEE FOR CONSIDERATION IN RELATION TO A CALL-IN OF A DECISION

A Call-In of a Decision form, duly completed and signed by 5 Members of the County Council viz., Councillors P S Rogers (Lead Call-In Member), Jeff Evans, T Victor Hughes, G O Jones, Raymond Jones, D Rhys Thomas was submitted to the Committee in relation to a decision taken by the Executive on 4th November, 2013, with regard to the Science Park Development. The Executive had accepted the recommendations contained within the report but had further resolved “to ensure the ring-

fencing of any income generated, to invest in the smallholdings estate.” It was this particular resolution that had been called-in for scrutiny.

A copy of the Executive report and the call-in papers were submitted as part of the Agenda papers for this meeting.

Councillor P.S. Rogers as the Lead Call-In Member stated that his reason for calling the decision in was because he considered it to be inappropriate in these very difficult economic times to ring-fence money to make further investments in smallholdings when so many other vital Council services faced severe cut backs or even closure. He considered that the smallholdings estate should generate its own income so as to ensure continuation of the estate. He also questioned what happened to the income from over 6,000 acres of land let by the Authority each year? Also that until recently over £200k p.a. was contributed to the Council coffers and that by now there was no contribution?

Councillor Rogers thanked the five members who had supported his call-in and mentioned that some of the new members on the Council required clarification as to the background and problems facing the smallholdings estate.

The Head of Service (Property) in reply drew the Committee’s attention to the various decisions taken by the Executive over the years as regards the governance of the smallholdings estate and in particular to the decisions taken on 7th September, 2010 *“to ring-fence the rental income for expenditure on the estate”* and on 5th October, 2010 *“that the service should plan on the basis that capital and revenue funding will continue to be earmarked but that this policy be reviewed from time to time in the light of progress on clearing the backlog of property maintenance and the financial circumstances at the time.”*

The report to the Executive on 4th November, 2013 mentioned that the disposal of land would still have to follow the Asset Management Policy and smallholdings policies unless it was approved by the Executive as a departure from normal policy. The Head of Service mentioned that the improvement programme was half way through the schedule of works and it was expected that the works would be completed within the next 2-3 years. The smallholdings estate would then be a very important asset to the Authority and in his opinion it would not be feasible to implement a policy change at this stage of proceedings. He further mentioned that the three yearly rent review was in the process of being considered by officers.

Both the Policy Holders for Property and Smallholdings and Economic Development provided the Committee with a brief synopsis of the reasoning behind the establishment of the smallholdings estate at the end of the First World War up to the present time. There was a requirement to bring these properties up to an acceptable standard of living from a health and safety perspective.

The former Portfolio Holder for Smallholdings, Councillor Bob Parry, OBE, was also afforded the opportunity of making his views known that there was a necessity to persevere with the work programme in view of the generally poor condition of the estate. He considered that ring-fencing should continue until the programme of works had been completed and that it be reviewed thereafter. It was also important to continue maintaining the estate because at the end of the day these were people’s homes and were very often used as a stepping stone for younger people to get an agricultural foothold on the Island.

During the course of the meeting, the Committee members were also given the opportunity to express their views and raise questions with the Head of Service and the respective Portfolio Holders.

RESOLVED to endorse the resolution of the Executive in this respect.

The meeting concluded at 12.40 pm

**COUNCILLOR DERLWYN HUGHES
CHAIR**