

EXTRAORDINARY PARTNERSHIP AND REGENERATION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held on 13 May 2016

PRESENT: Councillor Derlwyn R Hughes (Chair)
Councillor Alun W Mummery (Vice-Chair)

Councillors Trefor Lloyd Hughes, Carwyn Jones, Robert Ll Jones,
Dylan Rees, Dafydd Rhys Thomas

Other Members of the County Council invited to attend

Councillors Lewis Davies, Richard Dew, Jeff Evans, John Griffith,
Kenneth P Hughes, Victor Hughes, Llinos Medi Huws, Aled Morris
Jones, Gwilym O Jones, R G Parry, OBE, J Arwel Roberts, Alwyn
Rowlands, Ieuan Williams

IN ATTENDANCE: Chief Executive
Assistant Chief Executive (Governance and Business Process
Transformation)
Assistant Chief Executive (Partnerships, Community and Service
Improvement)
Senior Property Officer (Property) (GJ)
Technical Services Manager (Housing) (DR)
Housing Strategy and Development Manager (LR)
Scrutiny Officer (GR)
Committee Officer (SC)

ALSO PRESENT: Mr Mike Evans, Senior Planning Officer (Joint Planning Policy Unit -
Gwynedd and Anglesey)
Independent Advocate for Travellers (BH)

APOLOGIES: Councillors Jim Evans, Hywel Eifion Jones, R Meirion Jones,
Richard Owain Jones

The Chair welcomed all persons present, including Councillor Trefor Lloyd Hughes, as a new Member of the Partnership and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee. He also thanked Councillor John Griffith, a retiring member of the Committee, for his attendance and contribution over the years. The Chair also welcomed Ms Rebecca David Knight to the meeting. Ms Knight is conducting a review of scrutiny across the Council.

1. APOLOGIES

As noted above.

2. DECLARATION OF INTEREST

No declaration of interest was received.

3. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 12th April, 2016 were confirmed as correct subject to the following:-

Item 5 – Communities First

The Scrutiny Officer reported that he has e-mailed Sergeant Non Edwards, the Anti-Social Behaviour Co-ordinator for Gwynedd and Anglesey regarding anti-social behaviour incidents in Holyhead. It was anticipated that the North Wales Police will liaise with Môn Communities First Cluster Manager regarding this matter.

4. CONSULTATION ON GYPSY AND TRAVELLER SITES IN ANGLESEY – THE CONSULTATION PROCESS

Submitted - a report by the Head of Housing Services in relation to the above.

The Housing (Wales) Act 2014 places a duty on Local Authorities to provide sites for gypsies and travellers where a need has been identified, and provide sufficient appropriate sites in their Local Development Plan.

The Anglesey and Gwynedd Gypsy and Travellers Accommodation Needs Assessment 2016 (GTAA) has been produced jointly between the Isle of Anglesey County Council and Gwynedd Council, and was approved by Anglesey County Council's Executive on the 8th February, 2016.

The new Anglesey and Gwynedd GTTA identified the following need on Anglesey: -

1. A permanent residential site to meet the needs of the new travellers at the tolerated site at Pentraeth road;
2. Two sites to be used as temporary stopping places for gypsies and travellers along the A55, one in Holyhead and the other in the centre of the Island to accommodate people who are travelling to and from Ireland and people who travel around the UK in general.

The consultation exercise included a series of meetings with stakeholders and drop-in sessions were held (attended by approx 215 adults); Town/ Community Councils meetings; and officers attended two public meetings. It was noted that the views of businesses on industrial estates were also considered.

The consultation document with maps and consultation questionnaire was available on the Council website and at the drop-in sessions. Copies were sent to nearby businesses, landowners and tenants.

The Assistant Chief Executive introduced Mr Bryn Hall, an Independent Advocate employed by Unity, an organisation specialising in consultations with gypsy and traveller communities. Mr Hall has been engaging with the gypsy and traveller communities during this process, and the Committee has asked for feedback on the matter.

The Assistant Chief Executive summarised key points within the report and the consultation process undertaken as following:-

- The importance of understanding the background and differing needs of gypsies and travellers was highlighted.
- It was considered that the Independent Advocate has improved communication with the community of New Age Travellers in Pentraeth Road, in terms of being independent and airing their views.
- Local people, including farmers need to be informed directly of any developments in future.
- Senior Officers and the Portfolio Holder for Social Services and Housing have listened to comments made in meetings and lessons have been learned, which can be incorporated into future consultation processes.
- The Council's aim is to conduct a further consultation exercise during the next month.

Members raised the following issues:-

- The scoring matrix does not allow for reasons to be provided why certain sites are unsuitable.
- Members need to be involved in the consultation process from the outset.
- A question was raised whether the timetable for reporting back on the new consultation process to full Council in mid-July was too ambitious?

The Assistant Chief Executive responded that one of the restrictions was the Joint Local Development Plan with Gwynedd Council. In light of this, she was optimistic that the work could now be completed by the end of July.

- Public and local businesses must be kept informed of potential sites at the earliest opportunity.

The Chief Executive reported that a lot of the planning work had been undertaken to prepare for the consultation process. Officers now have sufficient knowledge to conduct consultation sessions in different communities on the same evenings.

RESOLVED to recommend to the Executive:-

- **That the Committee noted that concerns raised in the January meeting regarding the consultation process had been addressed.**
- **That the Executive approves the report and agrees that Officers implement issues identified to improve consultation exercises in future.**

5. ANALYSIS OF CONSULTATION RESPONSES - HOLYHEAD AREA

Submitted - a report of the Head of Housing Services in relation to the above.

The Housing Strategy and Development Manager reported that the Gwynedd and Anglesey Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Needs Assessment 2016 has identified unauthorised encampments in Holyhead, creating a need for a temporary stopping site.

The Consultation process focused on three sites:-

Site 1 - Vacant Plots, Penrhos Industrial Estate, Holyhead;

Site 2 - Land immediately to the east of B & M, Holyhead;

Site 3 - Land to the south of Alpoco.

The Housing Strategy and Development Manager reported that following a thorough consultation process, significant factors were highlighted, which suggested the three sites were unsuitable for a Temporary Stopping Place for gypsies and travellers. She further reported that meetings were held with Holyhead Town Council as well as Community Councils in Valley and Trearddur. She stated that there was evidence from the consultation exercise that there was a continued need for a site for gypsy and travellers in Holyhead, due to the volume of travellers passing through the port.

The following matters were raised by Members:-

- Concern was expressed about gypsy and traveller communities locally, and the prejudices they encounter from racism and being misunderstood by local people. It was noted that the Council has a duty to allay fears about prejudices and counter racist attitudes raised during the consultation. The Assistant Chief Executive responded that this response towards gypsies and travellers is not unusual, and is based on a mixture of valid comments, perceptions and prejudices, since not all gypsies and travellers integrate into the local community. It will take time to overcome prejudices and gain trust. The gypsy travellers who stay for a night or two in Holyhead are based elsewhere, and visit Holyhead for a brief period as they travel to Ireland; it is therefore unlikely that opportunities will emerge for them to get to know local people, though we still need to raise awareness and tackle prejudice.
- It was noted that travelling patterns between Holyhead and Ireland would need to be assessed. Stena, who own a large amount of land in Holyhead, as a port authority, have a responsibility to be involved in finding a solution. The Chief Executive and Assistant Chief Executive will seek to hold discussions with Stena.
- A question was raised as to why the sites deemed unsuitable were not identified as unsuitable earlier. It was noted that the process was started in January and the Council had to adhere to the Local Development Plan schedule.
- Members referred to the graph showing a wider area for a possible site outside the Holyhead town catchment. It was confirmed that the site has to be on the A55 corridor within close proximity to Holyhead.

A new consultation exercise will take place in the coming months to identify suitable sites for a temporary stopping place in Holyhead.

RESOLVED to recommend to the Executive that the Executive approves the 4 recommendations contained within the report in order that they may be implemented.

6. ANALYSIS OF CONSULTATION RESPONSES - CENTRE OF THE ISLAND

Submitted - a report by the Head of Housing Services in relation to the above.

The Senior Property Officer (Property) reported that as part of the consultation process, two sites had been identified on Mona Industrial Estate. The Officer stated that during the consultation period, an unauthorised encampment was established in Mona.

It was noted that during the consultation period, several important factors were identified from a health and safety point of view, mainly from the RAF regarding aircraft safety and the personal safety of individuals who encamp on the land. The Royal Air Force referred to issues relating to trespass and litter flying around, which could cause accidents or damage to aeroplanes.

RESOLVED to recommend to the Executive:-

- **That Point 1 of the report be forwarded to the Executive ie that none of the two sites included in the consultation process should be progressed or included in the Local Development Plan.**
- **That Points 2 and 3 be treated as observations with regard to the task of identifying an alternative site.**

7. ANALYSIS OF CONSULTATION RESPONSES - MENAI AREA

Submitted - a report of the Head of Housing Services in relation to the above.

The Senior Planning Officer (Joint Planning Policy Gwynedd and Anglesey) reported that the Council needed to identify sites that are fit for purpose. Land at Gaerwen and Penhesgyn and the site of the present unauthorised encampment in Pentraeth were considered as potential sites, which needed to be large enough to house four households. The site at Gaerwen was not suitable due to the cost of providing a water supply.

North Wales Police have commented that they have no issues relating to crime and disorder at the Pentraeth site, they are only concerned about road safety issues, should children live on the site.

Members raised the following issues:-

- The travellers have made their views known that their preference is to stay on the Pentraeth site. Members were concerned that moving the travellers could be a waste of money unless they were willing to move to a new site. The Assistant Chief Executive responded that the Council is legally bound to find a suitable site for the travellers and act in a responsible manner, as leaving them on the Pentraeth site would be unsafe.
- It was noted that the Pentraeth site is a tolerated development, therefore the Council does not have enforcement powers to evict travellers without first preparing a suitable permanent site.
- A question was asked about how the travellers would react to rules and regulations. Based on discussions with the travellers, officers believed that the travellers would accept that there would be rules on an official site monitored by the Council, but that it was important that the travellers were fully engaged in agreeing the rules with the Council.

The Independent Advocate reported that both he and the Housing Strategy and Development Manager have visited and discussed issues with the travellers at Pentraeth. He stated that the travellers learned about the consultation from newspaper reports, and had been upset by visits from local people before the consultation began, which damaged the engagement process. He further stated that the travellers need assurance from the Council and should be involved in the planning process. He referred to the consultation work that has been carried out, and how there is now scope for improved communication.

Members of the public, Mr Lawrence Gain, Mr Gareth Morgan, Mr Wyn Jones, Mrs Foulkes and a local resident were given permission to comment at the meeting and voiced their concerns to the Committee.

Points raised:-

- Health and Safety issues regarding air quality and pollution at Penhesgyn;
- Further discussions are needed with local communities;
- Size and cost of the proposed development in Penhesgyn;
- Site in Pentraeth is untidy;
- Access to farm land is restricted in Pentraeth;
- The Council already own land in Gaerwen;

RESOLVED:-

- **To note the report.**
- **To note that the Partnership and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee did not make a recommendation to the Executive in respect of this matter due to various concerns expressed at the meeting.**
- **That the decision be taken by the Executive in due course.**

The meeting concluded at 5.40 pm

**COUNCILLOR DERLWYN R HUGHES
CHAIR**