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Cyngor Sir
CEREDIGION
County Council

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ceredigion.gov.uk

Dear Sir / Madam

I write to inform you that a Meeting of the Corporate Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee will be held on Zoom on Wednesday, 7 July 2021 at 10.00 am for the transaction of the following business:

1. **Apologies**
2. **Disclosures of personal interest (including whipping declarations)**
Members are reminded of their personal responsibility to declare any personal and prejudicial interest in respect of matters contained in this agenda in accordance with the provisions of the Local Government Act 2000, the Council's Constitution and the Members Code of Conduct. In addition, Members must declare any prohibited party whip which the Member has been given in relation to the meeting as per the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011.
3. **Revised Concerns and Complaints Policy and Procedures (Pages 3 - 28)**
4. **Health and Wellbeing Strategy (Pages 29 - 42)**
5. **Forward Work Programme (Pages 43 - 46)**
6. **To confirm minutes of 25.11.2020 19.2.21 18.3.21 13.5.21 and to consider any matters arising from those Minutes. (Pages 47 - 60)**

Members are reminded to sign the Attendance Register

A Translation Services will be provided at this meeting and those present are welcome to speak in Welsh or English at the meeting.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'L Edwards'.

Miss Lowri Edwards
Corporate Lead Officer: Democratic Services

To: Chairman and Members of Corporate Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee

The remaining Members of the Council for information only.

Cyngor Sir CEREDIGION County Council

REPORT TO: Corporate Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee

DATE: 7th July 2021

LOCATION: MS Teams

TITLE: Revised Concerns and Complaints Policy and Procedures

PURPOSE OF REPORT: To ensure the Council has a robust and up-to-date Concerns and Complaints Policy (corporate) which is compliant with the requirements outlined by the Complaints Standards Authority (CSA).

REASON SCRUTINY HAVE REQUESTED THE INFORMATION: To be considered by the Committee prior to presenting the Policy & Procedures to Cabinet for approval.

BACKGROUND:

- The Concerns and Complaints Policy and Procedures have been reviewed and updated for two reasons:
 1. To incorporate the vast organisational and operational changes which have taken place since the last policy review in 2015, which includes the centralisation of the Complaints and FOI Service.
 2. To ensure that the Council's arrangements for managing corporate concerns and complaints is compliant with the requirements stipulated by the Complaints Standards Authority (CSA), which was introduced under the Public Services Ombudsman (Wales) 2019 Act.
- In line with the Model Concerns and Complaints Policy issued by the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales (PSOW) the Policy document provides complainants with information about how their concern/complaint will be managed by the Council. This includes guidance on the timescales of the two-stage policy, how members of the public can make a complaint if they are unhappy with the services provided (or not provided) by the Council and how they can refer their complaint for independent, external consideration by the PSOW or the Welsh Language Commissioner.
- The Concerns and Complaints Procedures document is an internal document and provides guidance for staff with regards to the operational arrangements that must be followed upon receipt, and during the investigation, of a concern or a complaint. This includes information on the escalation of a complaint from Stage 1 (informal resolution) to Stage 2 (formal investigation) and the role played by Services and the Complaints and FOI Service in resolving and learning from complaints.

- In the main, the arrangements outlined within both the Policy and Procedures documents are reflective of current working practices, particularly since the formation of the central Complaints and FOI Service in late 2016. However, due to recent changes to legislation, these documents also comply with Council’s statutory obligations to ensure an effective mechanism of governance to oversee all complaints activity within the Council – as detailed below:
 - i. Bi-annual reporting to the Cabinet Committee of Elected Members (including the Council’s Annual Report); as per the Public Services Ombudsman (Wales) 2019 Act.
 - ii. Information on complaints performance and the Council’s ability to handle complaints effectively will be reported to the Audit and Governance Committee at least twice a year; in accordance with the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021.
- Whilst the Concerns and Complaints Policy and Procedures being reviewed at this time relate only to the Council’s corporate services (i.e. Planning Service, Highways & Environmental Service, Finance Services etc.) separate policies exist for the management of Social Services Complaints received by the Council.

CURRENT SITUATION: The Council’s current Concerns and Complaints Policy is no longer fit-for-purpose due to the organisational, operational and legislative changes which have been implemented since the last review in 2015.

Has an Integrated Impact Assessment been completed? If not, please state why

Summary: The Policy review will not fundamentally alter the position for service-users but an IIA is in the process of being developed. The IIA will be presented to the Council meeting along with the Policy in September.

WELLBEING OF FUTURE

GENERATIONS:

- Long term:** To ensure the Council is fully compliant with its statutory duties under the legislation covered by the policies.
- Integration:** The policies will enable a clear and consistent approach across the Council for dealing with (corporate) concerns and complaints.
- Collaboration:** Not applicable.
- Involvement:** The contents of the policies largely represent current working practices and approval of the policies will allow for a more robust service. All corporate services within the Council will need to follow the policies.

Prevention: Approval of the policies will ensure that effective practices are in place to manage concerns and complaints activity in accordance with the requirements of legislation.

RECOMMENDATION (S):

1. That Corporate Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee recommend the draft Concerns and Complaints Policy and the accompanying Procedures to be presented to the Council Meeting in for approval on 23rd September 2021.

REASON FOR RECOMMENDATION (S):

To ensure that fit-for-purpose policies operational across the Council.

Contact Name: Marie-Neige Hadfield
Designation: Complaints and FOI Manager
Date of Report: 14th June 2021
Acronyms: CSA – Complaints Standards Authority
PSOW – Public Services Ombudsman for Wales
FOI – Freedom of Information
CLO – Corporate Lead Officer
CM – Corporate Manager



Cyngor Sir
CEREDIGION
County Council

Concerns and Complaints Policy (Corporate)



Author and Service: Marie-Neige Hadfield, Complaints & FOI Manager

Date approved by Cabinet: 23rd September 2021

Integrated Impact Assessment (Yes/No): No

Publication date: 1st October 2021

Policy Review Date: 31st March 2024

Concerns and Complaints Policy

Statement of Principles

Effective complaints handling processes should be:

Complainant Focused

- The complainant should always be at the centre of the complaints process
- Service providers need to be flexible when responding to complainants' differing needs

Simple

- Complaints processes should be well-publicised, have easy-to-follow instructions and have no more than two stages
- Information on advocacy services and support should be available
- Complaints responses should set out clearly the next stage and the right to approach the Ombudsman

Fair and Objective

- Complainants should receive a complete and appropriate response to their concerns
- Complainants and staff complained about should be treated equally and with dignity

Timely and Effective

- Complaints should be resolved promptly, when possible investigations should be thorough, yet prompt
- Complainants should be kept informed throughout of the progress of a lengthy investigation

Accountable

- Complainants should receive an honest and clear explanation of the findings of an investigation
- Service providers should explain to complainants what changes will be made if their complaint is upheld, wherever possible

Committed to Continuous Improvement

- Information from complaints will be collated and analysed
- Data will be shared with Ceredigion County Council senior leaders and the Ombudsman to support improvement in complaint handling and in service delivery
- Decision makers will regularly review the information gathered from complaints when planning service delivery

Concerns and Complaints Policy

Ceredigion County Council is committed to dealing effectively with concerns or complaints you may have about our services. We will treat people fairly and with respect and listening to feedback from our service-users when things go wrong.

We aim to clarify any issues you may be unsure about. If possible, we will put right any mistakes we may have made. We will provide any service you are entitled to which we have failed to deliver. If we did something wrong, we will apologise and, where possible, we will try to put things right for you. We also aim to learn from our mistakes and use the information we gain from complaints to improve our services.

Welsh Language Standards

You may make your complaint to any member of Council staff in Welsh or in English, depending on your language preference. In accordance with the Council's duty to comply with the Welsh Language Standards (WLS), we will communicate with you in the language of your choice.

Complaints can also be made regarding the Council's implementation and compliance with the WLS, or the standard of service provision delivered by the Council in Welsh. Complaints of this nature will be shared with the Council's Welsh Language Officer and you will have the opportunity to refer your complaint to the Welsh Language Commissioner at any time.

When to use this policy

When you express your concerns or complain to us, we will usually respond in the way we explain below. However, sometimes you may have a statutory right of appeal e.g. against a refusal to grant you planning permission or the decision not to give your child a place in a particular school, so rather than investigate your concern, we will explain to you how you can appeal. Sometimes, you might be concerned about matters that are not covered by this policy e.g. when a legal framework applies or in the event of an insurance claim. In such cases, we will advise you about how to make your concerns known to the appropriate body.

This policy does not apply to Freedom of Information or data access issues. Please direct your requests in writing to the relevant service:

Freedom of Information
Complaints and FOI Manager
Canolfan Rheidol
Rhodfa Padarn
Aberystwyth
Ceredigion
SY23 3UE

foi@ceredigion.gov.uk

Data Protection
Information & Data Protection Officer
Canolfan Rheidol
Rhodfa Padarn
Aberystwyth
Ceredigion
SY23 3UE

data.protection@ceredigion.gov.uk

This policy does not apply to complaints made about the provision of Social Services as there is a separate, statutory policy in place for this (i.e. “Are we getting it right?”). This policy also does not relate to complaints against schools. Whilst the Council can provide advice to schools regarding their complaints handling procedures, it is the school’s Governing Body that has responsibility for ensuring complaints are managed in accordance with the school’s own complaints procedures. You can obtain more information about the school’s complaints procedures and a copy of their policy by contacting the school directly.

Asking us to provide a service?

If you are approaching us to request a service, e.g. reporting a missed bin collection, or requesting an appointment this policy does not apply. If you make a request for a service and then are not happy with our response, you will be able to make your concern known to us as we describe below.

When should you complain?

Normally we will only be able to look at your concerns if you tell us about them within **six months** of the event that you are complaining about. This is because it is better to look into your concerns while the issues are still fresh in everyone’s mind.

In exceptional circumstances we may agree to look into matters that occurred over six months ago, but you will need to explain why you could not bring your complaint to our attention earlier. We will then consider whether there is enough information available to support undertaking an investigation outside of the normal timescale. In any event, we will not consider any concerns about matters which took place more than three years ago.

If you are expressing a concern on behalf of somebody else, we will need their agreement for you to act on their behalf.

What if there is more than one body involved?

If your complaint covers more than one body (e.g. a housing association) we will usually work with them to decide who should take the lead in dealing with your concerns. You will then be given the name of the person responsible for communicating with you while we consider your complaint.

If the complaint is about a body working on our behalf (e.g. repair contractors) you may wish to raise the matter with them first as we expect organisations providing a service for the council to have their own Complaints policy. If you are dissatisfied with the response, and you want to express your concern or complaint with the Council, we will look into this ourselves and respond to you, provided the contractors have had the opportunity to respond to you directly.

How to make your complaint

You can express your concern in any of the following ways:

- Ask for a copy of our form from the person with whom you are already in contact. Tell them that you want us to deal with your complaint in accordance with this policy.
- Get in touch with our Complaints and FOI Team on 01545 574151 if you want to make your complaint over the phone.
- Use the complaints form on our [website](#).
- E-mail us at: complaints@ceredigion.gov.uk
- Write to us: Complaints & FOI Team, Canolfan Rheidol, Rhodfa Padarn Aberystwyth, SY23 3UE

We aim to have concern and complaint forms available at all of our public areas e.g. at our Council offices and community libraries.

Copies of this policy and the complaint form are available in alternative languages, audio and braille upon request.

Dealing with your complaint – STAGE 1 (Informal Resolution)

Where possible, we believe it's best to deal with things straight away. You may be able to raise it with the person you're dealing with, or their line manager, who will try to resolve the issue for you there and then and make sure any lessons are learned as a consequence.

If the member of staff or manager cannot help, they will pass your concerns to the Complaints and FOI Service for further consideration under Stage 1 of the Concerns and Complaints Policy. As outlined above, you may also contact the Complaints and FOI Team directly to raise your concerns.

At Stage 1:

- We will acknowledge your concern within **two working** days and let you know how we intend to deal with it.
- We will ask you to tell us how you would like us to communicate with you and establish whether you have any particular requirements – for example, your preferred language of choice or if you need documents in large type.
- We will deal with your concern in an open and honest way.
- We will make sure that your dealings with us in the future do not suffer because you have expressed a concern or made a complaint.
- We will formally respond to your complaint within **10 working days** informing you of our findings and what we have done to resolve matters. If we are unable to respond to you

within this timeframe, **we will escalate your complaint to Stage 2**, Formal Investigation. The Complaints and FOI Team will advise you of these arrangements.

- If you remain dissatisfied with the outcome of your complaint at Stage 1, you will be advised within the response provided that you can request escalation of your complaint to Stage 2: Formal Investigation within **20 working days** of the date of your Stage 1 response.
- You will need to explain why you believe your complaint has not been addressed properly at Stage 1.

Dealing with your complaint – STAGE 2 (Formal Investigation)

If we have been unable to resolve your complaint satisfactorily at Stage 1, if we have exceeded the timescales set out under Stage 1 or, if your concerns are complex or of a more serious nature, we will conduct a formal investigation into your complaint.

At Stage 2:

- We will formally acknowledge your concern within **five working days** and let you know how we intend to deal with it.
- We will ask you to tell us how you would like us to communicate with you and establish whether you have any particular requirements – for example, your preferred language of choice or if you need documents in large type.
- We will deal with your concern in an open and honest way.
- We will make sure that your dealings with us in the future do not suffer because you have expressed a concern or made a complaint.
- We may need to meet with you to discuss your complaint or we may suggest alternative methods to try and resolve matters (e.g. mediation or a resolution meeting).
- We will aim to formally respond to your complaint within **20 working days**, informing you of our findings and what we have done to resolve matters. If we are unable to respond to you within this timeframe, the Complaints and FOI Team will contact you to inform you of the delay, provide an update on the investigation and give you a revised response date.
- We will include information in our formal response about where you can take your complaint if you remain unhappy with the outcome or the explanations provided. This is usually the [Public Services Ombudsman for Wales](#), but may also be the [Welsh Language Commissioner](#) if your complaint relates to the Welsh Language Standards, or the [Information Commissioner's Office](#) if your complaint is about information governance.

Investigation

We will tell you who we have asked to look into your complaint. If your complaint is straightforward, we will usually ask the Corporate Manager for the Service to investigate your complaint and respond to you. If your complaint is complex or of a serious nature, we may ask a manager from another Service to investigate matters. In exceptional circumstances, we may decide to appoint an independent investigating officer.

Our Complaints and FOI Team will keep you informed about how your complaint will be addressed, who is responsible for investigating the matters you have raised and when you can expect to receive a response.

We will set out our understanding of your complaint and ask you to confirm that these details are correct. We will also ask you to tell us what outcome you are hoping for. We may also need to discuss your complaint with you in more detail. We will let you know as early as possible if this is the case.

The person investigating your complaint will aim to establish the facts. The extent of the investigation will depend on how complex and how serious the issues are and in some cases, we may draw up an investigation plan.

The investigating officer will look at relevant evidence which may include information you have provided, our case files, notes of conversations etc. The investigating officer may also conduct staff interviews and look at our policies and any legal entitlement and guidance.

Outcome

If there is a simple solution that could resolve your complaint then we may ask you if you are happy to accept this. For example, where you have asked for a service and we can see straight away that you should have had it, we will offer to provide the service rather than undertake a formal investigation into your complaint.

If we formally investigate your complaint we will let you know what we find and if necessary, we will produce a report. We will explain how and why we came to our conclusions.

If we find that we made a mistake, we will tell you what happened and why.

If we find there is a fault in our systems or the way we do things, we will tell you what it is and how we plan to change things to stop it happening again.

If we have made a mistake we will always provide a formal apology within our response.

Putting things right

If we didn't provide you with a service you should have had, we'll aim to provide it now, if that's possible. If we didn't do something well, we will aim to put it right. If you have lost out as a result on our part, we will try to put you back in the position you would have been in if we'd have done things properly.

If you were entitled to funding and we did not provide it, we will try to refund the cost.

Our formal response to your complaint will provide details of any actions we will take to put things right.

The Ombudsman

If we do not succeed in resolving your complaint, you may complain to the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales. The Ombudsman is independent of all government bodies and can look into your complaint if you believe that you personally, or the person on whose behalf you are complaining:

- Have been treated unfairly or received a bad service through some failure on the part of the service provider.

- Have been disadvantaged personally by a service failure or have been treated unfairly.

The Ombudsman normally expects you to bring your concerns to our attention first and to give us a chance to put things right. You can contact the Ombudsman by:

- Phone: 0300 790 0203
- Email: ask@ombudsman.wales
- The website: www.ombudsman.wales
- Writing to: Public Services Ombudsman for Wales
1 Ffordd yr Hen Gae, Pencoed CF35 5LJ

Learning lessons

We take your concerns and complaints seriously and try to learn from any mistakes we've made. The Council's Leadership Group considers a summary of all complaints on a quarterly basis and is made aware of all serious complaints.

The Council's Cabinet of Elected Members also consider how we are performing in relation to complaints at least twice a year.

We share summary (anonymised) information on complaints received and complaints outcomes with the Ombudsman as part of our commitment to accountability and learning from complaints.

In line with the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 we also report information on complaints performance and the Council's ability to handle complaints effectively at least twice a year to the Audit and Governance Committee.

Where there is a need for significant change, we will develop an action plan setting out what we will do, who will do it and when we plan to do it.

What if you need help?

Our staff will aim to help you make your concerns known to us. If you need extra assistance, we will try to put you in touch with someone who can help. You may wish to contact:

Ceredigion Independent Professional Advocacy (CIPA)

- **Website:** www.cipawales.org.uk
- **Email:** info@cipawales.org.uk
- **Phone:** 0800 206 1387

You can also use this concerns and complaints policy if you are under the age of 18. If you need help, you can speak to someone on the [Meic Helpline](#):

- **Website:** www.meiccymru.org
- **Phone:** 0808 802 3456

Or contact the [Children's Commissioner for Wales](#):

- **Website:** www.childcom.org.uk
- **Email:** post@childcomwales.org.uk
- **Phone:** 0808 801 1000

What we expect from you

In times of trouble or distress, some people may act out of character. There may have been upsetting or distressing circumstances leading up to a concern or a complaint. We do not view behaviour as unacceptable just because someone is forceful or determined.

We believe that all complainants have the right to be heard, understood and respected. However, we also consider that our staff have the same rights. We therefore expect you to be polite and courteous in your dealings with us. We will not tolerate aggressive or abusive behaviour, unreasonable demands or unreasonable persistence. We have a separate policy to manage situations when we find that someone's actions are unacceptable.

DRAFT

APPENDIX A

CONCERN / COMPLAINT FORM

Please Note: The person who experienced the problem should normally fill in this form. If you are filling this in on behalf of someone else, please fill in section B.

A: Your details

Title:	Forename(s):	Surname:
Address and postcode:		
E-mail address:		
Daytime phone number:		
Please state how you would prefer us to contact you:		

Your requirements: if our usual way of dealing with complaints makes it difficult for you to use our service, for example if English or Welsh is not your first language or you need to engage with us in a particular way, please tell us so that we can discuss how we might help you.

B: MAKING A COMPLAINT ON BEHALF OF SOMEONE ELSE

THEIR DETAILS:

Please note: We have to be satisfied that you have the authority to act on behalf of the person who has experienced the problem.

Their full name:	
Address and postcode:	
What is your relationship to them?	
Why are you making a complaint on their behalf?	

C: About your concern / complaint

(please continue your answers to the following questions on a separate sheet(s) if necessary.)

C.1 Name of the department/section/service you are complaining about:

C.2 What do you think they did wrong, or failed to do?

C.3 Describe how you personally have suffered or have been affected:

C.4 What do you think should be done to put things right?

C.5 When did you first become aware of the problem?

C.6 Have you already put your concern to the staff responsible for delivering the service? If so, please explain how and when you did so:

C.7 If it is more than 6 months since you became first aware of the problem, please give the reason why you have not complained before now:

If you have any documents to support your concern/complaint, please attach them with this form.

Signature: _____

Date: _____

When you have completed this form please send it to:

Complaints and FOI Team, Canolfan Rheidol, Rhodfa Padarn, Aberystwyth, SY23 3UE

or via e-mail to: complaints@ceredigion.gov.uk.



Cyngor Sir
CEREDIGION
County Council

Corporate Concerns and Complaints Procedure



Author and Service: Marie-Neige Hadfield, Complaints & FOI Manager
Publication date: 23rd September 2021
Review Date: 31st March 2024

Concerns and Complaints Procedure

Complaints Handling Guidelines for Staff

This document should be considered in conjunction with the Council's Concerns and Complaints Policy (2021 version) and sets out the requirements and considerations to ensure that corporate complaints are managed effectively.

The Council's (corporate) Concerns and Complaints Policy and Social Services Complaints Policy and Procedures are compliant with our obligations with regard to the Complaints Standards Authority (CSA) which was introduced as part of the Public Services Ombudsman (Wales) 2019 Act. The purpose of the CSA is to ensure that all Councils in Wales have a uniform procedure for managing and reporting all complaints activity.

1 Introduction

- 1.1 Complaints should be viewed as a positive means of promoting customer satisfaction and identifying opportunities to improve service delivery. The purpose of this procedure is to explain to staff at all levels how the Council's Concerns and Complaints Policy operates and to provide practical advice on how to deal with concerns and complaints.
- 1.2 Following its formation in 2019, the CSA developed a Model Concerns and Complaints Policy for adoption by all Local Authorities in Wales. The aim of this Policy was to create a standard, streamlined and seamless process for handling complaints made by members of the public. In addition, the CSA:
 - Supports Local Authorities to deliver effective complaints handling
 - Collects and publishes data from the quarterly reports provided by Local Authorities
 - Delivers bespoke training packages to Local Authorities
- 1.3 The Concerns and Complaints Policy will be available in all Council buildings and accessible via the Council's website and upon request from the Complaints and FOI Service – as with other related policies (i.e. Social Services Complaints Policy and Procedures; Freedom of Information Policy and the Environmental Information Policy).

2 What is a complaint?

- 2.1 A '**complaint**' is defined as:-
 - an expression of dissatisfaction or concern
 - either written or spoken or made by any other communication method
 - by one or more members of the public
 - about a public service provider's action or lack of action
 - or about the standard of service provided

- which requires a response.

3 When does the Complaints Policy apply?

- 3.1 Not all expressions of dissatisfaction need to be treated as complaints requiring a formal response under the Concerns and Complaints Policy. All services receive comments, queries and reports of problems as a routine part of their day-to-day business. Every effort should be made to deal with these matters immediately, either by providing information, instigating the appropriate action or explaining a decision. Service users should be informed of their right to make a complaint under the Concerns and Complaints Policy if they are unhappy with the response received from the Service.
- 3.2 The following will **not** be treated as complaints under the Policy:
- an initial request for a service (e.g. reporting a faulty street light)
 - an appeal against a '*properly made decision*' by the Council (i.e. a decision the Council is entitled to make and where the relevant laws, policies and procedures have been correctly followed)
 - representations regarding a Council policy or intended change of policy (e.g. Council Tax increases, revised frequency of refuse collections)
 - attempts to seek change to legislation or a properly made policy decision, or attempts by lobbying groups / organisations to seek to promote a cause
 - complaints for which there is a legal remedy or where legal proceedings already exist
 - complaints about a third party (e.g. noisy neighbours, parking fines issued by private car park companies)
- 3.3 The following types of complaint **should not** be considered under the Policy, as they will be subject to separate arrangements, further details of which are available from the Complaints and FOI Service:
- complaints about schools (*refer to individual school policy which will be compliant with WG Complaints Procedure for School Governing Bodies in Wales; circular 011/2012; October 2012*)
 - complaints about Social Services (*refer to Social Services Complaints Policy*)
 - complaints where there is an alternative procedure for appealing against a decision, e.g. planning appeals, housing benefit appeals or penalty charge notices (*refer to relevant policy/service for further guidance*)
 - complaints about the conduct of a Councillor (*refer to Code of Conduct for Councillors*)
 - potential claims for compensation, which should be referred to the Council's Insurance section (*to be progressed in accordance with the relevant Financial Services policy*)
 - complaints from the public or members of staff about employee conduct, employment matters or complaints about recruitment decisions; all of which should be referred to the People and Organisations Service (*to be addressed under the relevant Human Resources policies and procedures*)

4 How does the Council's Concerns and Complaints Policy work?

- 4.1 The Complaints and FOI Service can be contacted to provide advice and guidance with regards to the Concerns and Complaints Policy and, as a centralised, corporate service, will co-ordinate and facilitate the response and resolution of concerns and complaints. For further advice on these arrangements, the Complaints and FOI Service can be contacted by telephone on: 01545 574151 or via e-mail: complaints@ceredigion.gov.uk.

- 4.2 Early intervention to resolve a concern is proven to be the most effective way to deal with the issue and inspire confidence from the service-user, though this may not always be possible. The Complaints and FOI Service can provide services with additional support to prevent an issue becoming a complaint; however, responsibility for resolving the concern / complaint ultimately lies with the service responsible.
- 4.3 There are two stages to the Council's Concerns and Complaints Policy, both of which require prompt co-operation from the service(s) at the centre of the complaint. The timescales differ between stages and the Complaints and FOI Service will co-ordinate and facilitate the timely acknowledgements, responses and updates with regards to all complaints activity (i.e. issuing acknowledgement letters, formal responses etc.).
- 4.4 The diagram below provides an outline of the timescales of each stage as outlined in the Policy. Service Managers (SMs), Corporate Managers (CMs) and Corporate Lead Officers (CLOs), as indicated by the specific case, will be required to ensure investigations and responses are passed to the Complaints and FOI Service **in advance** of the prescribed timescales – as outlined in red text below.

Stage 1: Informal Resolution

Service Managers will be required to act promptly to investigate the complaint. More specific information on this stage can be found in Section 7.

In the context of early resolution, all Stage 1 complaints must be responded to within **10 working days***

Service Managers will be required to submit their response to the Complaints and FOI Service within 8 working days

**Failure to respond to a Stage 1 complaint within the prescribed timescale of 10 w/d will result in the automatic escalation of the complaint to a Formal Investigation at Stage 2. As such, the CM and CLO will be informed and the process will need to be completed within the remaining 10w/d of the (now Stage 2) complaint.*

Stage 2: Formal Investigation

CMs (and occasionally CLOs) will liaise with the Complaints and FOI Service to identify a suitable Investigating Officer to undertake the formal investigation. In some cases it may be necessary to appoint an Independent Investigating Officer. More specific information on this can stage be found in Section 8.

Stage 2 complaints should be responded to within **20 working days**. However, it is recognised that some investigations may take longer than this. If, for any reason, it will not be possible to provide a substantive response to the complainant within the prescribed timescale, the Investigating Officer must notify the Complaints and FOI Service as early as possible.

CMs/CLOs assigned to investigate a complaint at Stage 2 are required to provide their response and/or report to the Complaints and FOI Service within 18 working days. Alternatively, if it is anticipated that this will not be possible, they must notify the Complaints and FOI Service so that arrangements can be made to update the complainant.

- 4.5 The underlying principle of the management of complaints at the formal stage is to **'Investigate Once, Investigate Well'**. Emphasis must be placed on the importance of conducting a thorough investigation to address all aspects of a complaint rather than re-visiting matters and conducting multiple investigations at different levels within the Council.
- 4.6 Every formal Stage 2 response will include details on how the complainant can refer their complaint to the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales (or the Welsh Language Commissioner if the complaint relates to the failure to adhere to the Welsh Language Standards) if they remain dissatisfied.
- 4.7 Further information regarding referrals to the Ombudsman and Welsh Language Commissioner can be found below in Sections 11 and 12, respectively.

5 Who is responsible for dealing with complaints?

- 5.1 All members of staff may become involved with a complaint from time to time, particularly frontline staff who are delivering services to the public on a day-to-day basis. This procedure, alongside the Policy itself, aims to enable **all** members of staff to identify potential complaints as they arise and to empower them to resolve any issues on the spot or escalate through their management channels.
- 5.2 Resolving concerns or enquiries received directly from service-users or via the Complaints and FOI Service and/or Clic should be considered as part-and-parcel of routine service delivery. In instances whereby a concern cannot be resolved in this manner, the service-user should be informed about how they can make a complaint and/or the matter should be referred to the Complaints and FOI Service to be recorded.
- 5.3 The Council is committed to providing appropriate training for staff at all levels on corporate standards for complaints handling. More information regarding training can be obtained from the Complaints and FOI Service.

6 Receiving a complaint

- 6.1 A complaint can be made in person, by telephone, e-mail, letter or via the on-line complaint form to any member of Council staff. It is important that the complaint and any information relating to the complainant is passed immediately to the Complaints and FOI Service.
- 6.2 In accordance with the Council's statutory obligations under the Welsh Language Measure 2011, a person can make a complaint in Welsh or English – whichever is their language of preference. The complaints process will be followed, in its entirety, in accordance with this preference (i.e. issue a Welsh acknowledgment letter, response letter etc.).
- 6.3 The Council will usually only consider complaints which are made within **6 months** of the incident which triggered the complaint, unless there are very good reasons for not bringing the matter to the Council's attention earlier. In any event, the Council will not consider complaints about matters which took place more than three years ago.
- 6.3 Any member of staff who receives a complaint should notify the Complaints and FOI Service immediately.

- 6.4 If the complainant wishes to make their complaint verbally (in person or by telephone) they must be signposted to the Complaints and FOI Service. Alternatively, the staff member involved in the matter can pass any information they gather, as well as the contact information of the complainant, to the Complaints and FOI Service.
- 6.5 Upon receipt of a complaint by the Complaints and FOI Service, the complaint will be assessed and contact will be made with the relevant SM / CM / CLO in order to:
- (a) consider whether the Concerns and Complaints Policy applies,
 - (b) check whether the time for making a complaint has expired,
 - (c) agree the most appropriate Stage for the complaint to be investigated
- 6.6 The Complaints and FOI Service will then record the complaint on the complaints database in accordance with the actions agreed with the service.
- 6.7 In considering whether a complaint should be dealt with under Stage 1 or Stage 2 of the Concerns and Complaints Policy, the questions below should be taken into account. If the answer to any of these questions is 'yes', it is likely to be more appropriate for the complaint to proceed directly for investigation at Stage 2.
- (a) Has the complainant already tried to resolve the complaint with the staff responsible for delivering the service? *(e.g. is this an issue which has been considered at length at various levels of management within the service?)*
 - (b) Have there been any disagreements with the staff responsible for delivering the service? *(e.g. does the complainant question the honesty/integrity of the staff they have been dealing with?)*
 - (c) Are there any broader reasons why it would be more appropriate for a more senior officer to consider the complaint? *(e.g. if the matter relates to an issues of significant public interest or if similar issues have been raised by others within a short period of time)*
 - (d) Does the complaint raise any serious or complex issues? *(e.g. whether referral for safeguarding screening has taken place and the matter is now deemed appropriate to conclude under the Concerns and Complaints Policy)*
 - (e) Has the complainant asked for a formal investigation or expressed a wish to proceed straight to Stage 2? *(whether this is proportionate or reasonable will depend on the circumstances of the complaint and the outcome of discussions with the service).*

7 Stage 1 – Informal resolution

- 7.1 A member of staff who is responsible for responding to a Stage 1 complaint should:
- (a) Ensure that the Complaints and FOI Service is aware of the complaint and that it is recorded on the complaints database.
 - (b) The Complaints and FOI Service will seek to acknowledge the complaint and explain the arrangements under Stage 1 and advise that they will receive a response within **10 working days**.

- (c) As outlined in Section 4, if it is not possible to respond to the complaint within 10 working days, the service must inform the Complaints and FOI Service as early as possible in order for the complaint to be escalated to Stage 2 and for them to notify the complainant accordingly. **It must be noted that in these circumstances the 'clock' does not reset to provide an additional 20 working days; therefore the complaint must be responded to within the next 10 working days following the date of receipt.**
- (d) When responding to a Stage 1 complaint, complainants will be advised that they may request a formal investigation under Stage 2 if they are not satisfied with the outcome. The complainant will also be advised that they need to provide specific details to support their request for a formal investigation within 20 working days of the Stage 1 response being issued.
- (e) In rare cases, there may not be any merit in accepting the complainants request to escalate their complaint for a formal investigation under Stage 2 (i.e. if it is deemed that nothing further can be achieved by investigating matters at Stage 2 or if the rationale provided by the complainant is unreasonable or disproportionate). This will usually be discussed between the Complaints and FOI Service and the Service in receipt of the complaint so that everybody is in agreement that the complaint should be refused. Such cases will involve a formal response from the Complaints and FOI Manager explaining why the matter will not be investigated formally and the Ombudsman's contact information will be included in the letter.
- (f) In addition to resolving the complaint, emphasis must be placed on **learning lessons**. For reporting purposes, information is required from services upon the conclusion of a complaint with regards to any service improvements or lessons learned as a direct consequence of the complaint.

8 Stage 2 – Formal investigation

- 8.1 Information about how a complaint can be escalated to Stage 2 will be included in every Stage 1 response issued by the Complaints and FOI Service. However, if a member of staff receives a request for a formal investigation of their complaint, this should be forwarded to the Complaints and FOI Service immediately.
- 8.2 The Complaints and FOI Service will liaise with the CM and/or CLO of the relevant Service(s) referred to in the complaint with regards to the following actions:
 - (a) A formal acknowledgement will be issued to the complainant within **5 working days**. This letter will explain how the matter is being investigated and by whom, when they will be likely to receive a response and they will be offered the opportunity to discuss their complaint further with the Service and/or Complaints and FOI Service.
 - (b) A copy of the Concerns and Complaints Policy will be provided and, if unknown, the Complaints and FOI Service will seek to clarify the complainant's preferred method and language of communication and whether they have any particular requirements (e.g. if they require support in making their complaint or if they have a disability which requires the Council to make reasonable adjustments in order to enable them to make their complaint).
 - (c) Obtain written consent in instances where somebody is acting on behalf of the service user.

- (d) All information will be retained in the complaint file (in the event that matters are subsequently referred to the Ombudsman). Details of the complaint will also be recorded on the complaints database for monitoring and reporting purposes.
 - (e) If the complaint is 'out of time' (i.e. over 6 months since the incident which triggered the complaint) consideration should be given as to whether there are good reasons to justify acceptance of the complaint regardless of the time which has elapsed.
- 8.3 Stage 2 complaints will usually be investigated by the CM of the relevant Service and who is senior to any staff directly referred to in the complaint. Occasionally, it may be necessary for the CLO to undertake the Stage 2 investigation. It is vital however, that the investigation is conducted by a senior member of staff who has not been directly involved in the issues referred to in the complaint. In the interests of openness and transparency (in order to support staff members, attempt to resolve the complaint and preserve the integrity of the process) it may be considered more appropriate for a CM or CLO from another Service to investigate the complaint. Such instances will be discussed between the Complaints and FOI Manager, the CM/CLO of the Service at the centre of the complaint and the CM for Partnerships and Performance (who has management responsibility of the Complaints and FOI Service) and in highly contentious cases, the CLO for Policy, Performance and Public Protection.
- 8.4 It is imperative that complaints are not investigated by a member of staff where there may be a conflict of interests (i.e. a close relationship between the investigator and a member of staff involved in the complaint). Any possible situations need to be declared immediately and an alternative investigator appointed.
- 8.5 The person investigating a Stage 2 complaint may be required to do all or some of the following (depending on the nature, complexity or severity of the complaint):
- (a) Offer a discussion with the complainant and agree the matters which will be investigated.
 - (b) Confirm the complainant's desired outcomes (if this is not clear from their complaint).
 - (c) Consider whether the matter can be resolved by way of a 'quick fix' without having to undertake a full investigation e.g. by offering to provide a service which the complainant should have received.
 - (d) Maintain communication with the Complaints and FOI Service so that progress can be recorded and if required, holding letters can be issued to the complainant (if it is not possible to complete the investigation within the prescribed timescale of **20 working days**).
 - (e) Compile a formal report (template attached as Appendix 2) to accompany their response. The draft report and response, once complete, should be shared with the Complaints and FOI Service.
 - (f) The Complaints and FOI Service will quality check the documents and retain any evidence in the complaints file. In addition, they will record the outcome of the complaint and issue the formal response directly to the complainant, ensuring that all compulsory information is included therein (i.e. referral to the Ombudsman, whether the complaint(s) are upheld or not upheld etc.).

9 Recording and Reporting Complaints Activity

- 9.1 All complaints will be recorded by the Complaints and FOI Service on the complaints database. The Stage, outcome and timeliness of the complaint response will be included in this recorded information, as will any information about lessons learned.
- 9.2 The Complaints and FOI Service will provide a detailed report to the CSA and Leadership Group on a quarterly basis. Complaints activity will be reported on to Cabinet and the Council's Audit Committee twice a year (to include the Annual Report which will be presented together with the Ombudsman's Annual Report for the Council).
- 9.3 Identifying lessons to be learned and implementation of improvements as a consequence of complaints are mandatory fields on the database and this information will be summarised, or examples chosen, to be included in the reports produced. This will reinforce the importance of making positive changes to prevent future occurrences.

10 What if the complaint involves more than one Council Service or another organisation?

- 10.1 If a complaint involves more than one Council Service, the Complaints and FOI Service will liaise with the CMs and CLOs of the relevant Services to agree who will be leading on specific elements of the complaint. The Complaints and FOI Service will co-ordinate the complaint and, if necessary, undertake the investigation. If agreement cannot be reached as to who should lead on a particular aspect of a complaint, this will be resolved via escalation to the CM for Partnerships and Performance and/or the CLO for Policy, Performance and Public Protection.
- 10.2 A complaint involving another organisation (e.g. a Housing Association or the Local Health Board) will be discussed with the CM / CLO of the relevant Service(s) so they are aware of a complaint involving their Service and, if known, obtain from them the details of any external parties referred to.
- 10.3 The Complaints and FOI Service will notify the complainant in writing that their complaint involves another organisation and their consent will be required prior to sharing the complaint with any interested parties. The expectation will be that the organisation involved in the majority of the complaint should lead on the investigation. Alternatively, it may be decided that each organisation addresses its own sections of the complaint under their policies with the aim of responding directly to the complainant as opposed to issuing a single, combined response.
- 10.4 If the complaint involves an organisation who is providing a Service on our behalf (i.e. a commissioned/contracted Service) the circumstances of each individual case will need to be considered and discussed between the Complaints and FOI Service and the commissioning Service. Usually, the expectation would be for the commissioned Service to investigate the complaint under their own complaints procedures and provide a copy of their response to the Council. However, on occasion, the circumstances may require the Council to follow its own complaints procedures (in this case, the Concerns and Complaints Policy). Such instances will be discussed at length between the Complaints and FOI Service and the commissioning Service.

11 Public Services Ombudsman for Wales

- 11.1 The Ombudsman is independent of all government bodies and looks into complaints about public services in Wales, including complaints made against Local Authorities. A complainant who is not satisfied with the way in which his/her complaint has been handled by the Council can refer their complaint to the Ombudsman.
- 11.2 A complaint can be referred to the Ombudsman at any stage, but the Ombudsman will usually request that the Council has had a reasonable opportunity to investigate and respond in accordance with the relevant complaints policy in the first instance. However, the Ombudsman has discretion to accept a complaint for investigation at any time if they consider it reasonable to do so.
- 11.3 The Complaints and FOI Service will provide support and advice to Services who are involved in complaints under consideration or investigation by the Ombudsman. In addition, the Complaints and FOI Service will be able to provide resources to assist Services during the process (including the Ombudsman 'Toolkit', Factsheets and advice on previous similar cases reported on by the Ombudsman).
- 11.4 Complainants will be advised within their response at Stage 2 that they can contact the Ombudsman if they remain dissatisfied. The same also applies in instances where it is deemed that the complaints policy does not apply, and when requests for investigations at Stage 2 are refused (as per point 7.1(e) above). The Ombudsman's contact details are as follows:
- Telephone: 0300 790 0203
 - E-mail: ask@ombudsman-wales.org.uk
 - Online Form: www.ombudsman-wales.org.uk
 - Via post: Public Services Ombudsman for Wales, 1 Ffordd yr Hen Gae, Pencoed CF35 5LJ
- 11.5 The Complaints and FOI Service will record, monitor and report on all Ombudsman activity involving the Council as part of its quarterly reporting procedure. In addition, Ombudsman activity will be included in reports presented to the Cabinet, Audit Committee and any other relevant committees on a biannual basis. The end of year report compiled by the Complaints and FOI Service will be accompanied by the Ombudsman's Annual Letter outlining the Council's performance with regard to cases referred for Ombudsman consideration.

12 Welsh Language Complaints

- 12.1 As per 6.1 complainants have the right to express their dissatisfaction in their preferred language. Should any complaints arise regarding the provision of Council Services in the medium of Welsh, these will be reported directly to the Council's Welsh Language Officer. In addition, the Complaints and FOI Service will record the case on the complaints database – highlighting that the nature of the complaint relates to the Council's failure to adhere to its statutory obligations under the Welsh Language Standards.

12.2 Complaints regarding the Council's performance in respect of the Welsh Language Standards will be included in the Welsh Language Officer's Annual Report which is submitted to the Welsh Language Commissioner.

12.3 Complainants who remain dissatisfied following the Council's response at Stage 2 where the Council's compliance or performance with the Welsh Language Standards is under dispute, should be advised within their formal response, that they may refer their complaint to the Welsh Language Commissioner for external consideration.

12.4 The Welsh Language Commissioner's details are provided below:

- Telephone: 0345 6033 221
- E-mail: post@cyg-wlc.cymru
- Website: [Welsh Language Commissioner](#)
- Via post: Welsh Language Commissioner, Market Chambers, 5–7 St Mary Street, Cardiff CF10 1AT

13 Anonymous complaints

13.1 Complaints made anonymously may still raise issues of serious concern and the Complaints and FOI Service will advise Services whether the information provided is sufficient to warrant further investigation in the accordance with the Concerns and Complaints Policy. Whilst the formal response process would not be applicable in these circumstances, there may be merit in undertaking an investigation and retaining the documentation generated in the event that the complainant later provides their information, or if similar concerns arise.

14 Unacceptable actions by complainants

14.1 The Council is committed to dealing with all complaints fairly and impartially and to providing a high quality service to those who complain. Access to this Service and to Council offices and employees is not normally limited. However, there are a small number of complainants who, because of the frequency of their contact with the Council, hinder consideration of their own complaints.

14.2 In most cases, complaints can be dealt with quickly and efficiently. However, the behaviour of a minority of service users can make investigating and resolving a complaint difficult. These service users can also take up a lot of officer time so there is less time to help others.

14.3 In a very small number of cases, a complainant's behaviour may become unacceptable. The Council has a duty to protect its staff from behaviour which is abusive, offensive and threatening, and in these cases, will consider the matter under the Unacceptable Actions by Service Users Policy.

14.4 Features of a persistent complainant may include:

- Continuously shouting to a member of staff, swearing, threats, and name-calling
- Obsessive, harassing, or prolific behaviour
- Making the same complaint repeatedly or with minor differences but never accepting the outcome

- Seeking an unrealistic outcome and refusing to accept that the Council cannot provide what they are asking for

14.5 When the relationship has become unworkable, the Complaints and FOI Service, together with the relevant CM and CLO will consider applying the Unacceptable Actions by Service Users Policy.

15 Compliments

15.1 It is equally important for the Council to record compliments received from members of the public in order to provide positive feedback to staff and share best practice. A compliment can be defined as an expression of praise or positive feedback regarding services provided by the Council.

15.2 Staff should forward details of all compliments received to the Complaints and FOI Service who will record the information on the central database for inclusion in the quarterly and biannual reports.

15.3 Occasionally, compliments will be received in the form of formal correspondence to the Council. In such cases, the compliment should be formally acknowledged and the service-user thanked for taking the time to provide positive feedback.

16 Freedom of Information Act 2000 Complaints

16.1 Complaints about the Council's management of requests under the Freedom of Information (FOI) Act 2000 will be addressed under the relevant policy (e.g. Freedom of Information Policy or Environmental Information Regulations Policy). This process is considered as an 'Internal Review' which will be considered and responded to by the CLO for Policy, Performance and Public Protection.

16.2 All Internal Reviews are recorded and included in all routine reports referred to above.

16.3 If an applicant remains dissatisfied with the outcome of their Internal Review, they are informed that they may refer their case to the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) for further consideration.

Cyngor Sir CEREDIGION County Council

REPORT TO:	Corporate Resources & Scrutiny Committee
DATE:	7 July 2021
LOCATION:	Online
TITLE:	Employee Health & Wellbeing Strategy 2021 – 2026
PURPOSE OF REPORT:	To review and recommend Employee Health & Wellbeing Strategy 2021 – 2026
REASON SCRUTINY HAVE REQUESTED THE INFORMATION:	To review new strategy

BACKGROUND:

The vision of the current Corporate Strategy states that *“Ceredigion County Council delivers value for money sustainable bilingual public services that support a strong economy and healthy environment while promoting well-being in our people and our communities.”* It is recognised that our employees are key to the delivery of this vision and have a direct impact on the quality of services provided to the residents of Ceredigion. As one of the largest employers in the county, with a large number of our workforce also residents, improving the health and wellbeing of our employees will impact on improvements in health and wellbeing across Ceredigion.

Employee Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2021 – 2026

This strategy has been developed following one employee survey conducted just before the Covid-19 pandemic started and one in December 2020. The aim of the strategy is to improve not only individual wellbeing but also, as a result, that of the Council’s teams and services.

The Strategy sets out key goals, under five separate areas identified as ‘pillars of wellbeing’:

- Positive Environments
- Policies and Practice
- Healthy Lifestyle
- Mental Health & Wellbeing
- Culture and behaviour

The initial focus will be on promoting healthier lifestyle behaviours, a commitment to sign the Time to Change Wales Pledge (working towards removing mental health stigma), a programme to introduce Mental Health First Aiders and Wellbeing Champions across the

Council, and the creation of a Health and Wellbeing Steering Group with the aim of achieving The Corporate Health Standard (Bronze) within the first two years.

The strategy will be driven the Employee Health and Wellbeing Officer in People & Organisation, but with collaborative working across the Council.

Has an Integrated Impact Assessment been completed? If not, please state why

WELLBEING OF FUTURE GENERATIONS:

Summary:

Long term:

Integration:

Collaboration:

Involvement:

Prevention:

RECOMMENDATION (S):

- To recommend the approval of the Employee Health & Wellbeing Strategy 2021-2026

REASON FOR RECOMMENDATION (S):

Contact Name: Geraint Edwards
Designation: Corporate Lead Officer – People & Organisation (Interim)
Date of Report: 15/06/2021
Acronyms:

Employee Health and Wellbeing 2021-2026 Strategy

1 Introduction

Our Corporate Strategy 2017-2022 outlines the following vision for Ceredigion, *“Ceredigion County Council delivers value for money sustainable bilingual public services that support a strong economy and healthy environment while promoting wellbeing in our people and our communities.”*

It is recognised that our employees are key to the delivery of this vision and have a direct impact on the quality of services provided to the residents of Ceredigion. We understand that when our employees are healthy, motivated and have a sense of wellbeing, the experience and outcomes for our residents improves. As one of the largest employers in the county, with a large number of our workforce also residents, improving the health and wellbeing of our employees will support improvements in health and wellbeing across Ceredigion.

Growing evidence shows that the workplace can be an effective place to improve the wellbeing of individuals, families and communities. Being in work can offer financial rewards, social connections, satisfaction and a sense of belonging, meaning and purpose. Dame Carol Black’s report ‘Building a Healthier Tomorrow’ (2008) evidences that an employee who has purpose, feels valued by their employer and peers, operates in a supportive culture and understands how their contribution helps organisational success, is more productive. This has benefits for the individual, the team and the organisation as a whole.

2 Vision

Develop a culture which promotes and embeds positive social, physical and mental wellbeing behaviours in order that our employee community have the internal resources and resilience to fully embrace their work and personal life.

Develop an employee community that shares responsibility for health and wellbeing, identifying difficulties early, to accelerate targeted, effective and timely interventions.

The Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development define employee wellbeing as

‘Creating an environment to promote a state of contentment which allows an employee to flourish and achieve their full potential for the benefit of themselves and their organisation.’ (CIPD 2016)

3 Supporting Principles

Employee Health and Wellbeing is driven by our People and Organisation Service, with direction provided by our Employee Health and Wellbeing Officer.

This strategy will be delivered and embedded through collaborative working partnerships across our organisation, including but not limited to a Health and Wellbeing Steering Group, Mental Health First Aiders and Health and Wellbeing

Champions. It is intended that this strategy informs the work carried out to meet Public Health Wales' Corporate Health Standard.

This ambitious strategy, though with high aspirations, is intended to be achieved over the next 5 years.

For the purpose of this strategy, health and wellbeing are seen as embracing the whole person – physical and mental health both within and external to the workplace.

“Health is greater than simply an absence of ill health and disease, and is defined as a feeling of physical, emotional and psychological wellness.”

World Health Organisation definition (1948)

4 The national context

The CIPD's 2020 Health and Wellbeing at Work Survey, shows that nearly two-thirds of organisations take a strategic approach to wellbeing. Nevertheless, over a third of public sector respondents report their organisation is much more reactive than proactive. The key themes that emerged from the survey, which can help to inform our Health and Wellbeing Strategy are:

- **Presenteeism** and **'leaveism'** are common. 'Presenteeism' (people coming to work when unwell) and 'leaveism' (eg people working outside contracted hours, or using annual leave to work/for illness) are critical indicators of the 'health' of an organisation's culture. These unhealthy workplace practices have serious potential implications for employees' physical and mental health, as well as for productivity.
- **Mental health conditions** are prevalent and increasing. 3/5 of public sector respondents had seen an increase in reported common mental health conditions among employees. Moreover, mental ill health remained among the top causes of long term absence for all sectors.
- **Stress-related absence** were particularly prevalent in the public sector. Over 2/5 of public sector organisations report that stress-related absence (most commonly caused by heavy workloads) had increased over the last 12 months (44%, compared with 36% of the private and 33% of non-profits). Stress is the most common cause of long-term absence in the public sector.
- **Absence** levels are considerably higher in the public sector. The average level of absence in the public sector was eight days which was considerably higher than in other sectors (private services sector: 4.3 days; manufacturing and production: 6.3 days; non-profit sector: 5.2 days).

5 Health and Wellbeing at Ceredigion

In 2020 data regarding the health and wellbeing of the Council's employees was collected on two occasions.

Health Needs Assessment

A Health Needs Assessment was conducted during February and March 2020. The data collected from this Health Needs Assessment served to provide a baseline to

benchmark activities and interventions. The survey was completed by **46%** of the workforce. Data was not collected from staff employed by School Governing Bodies.

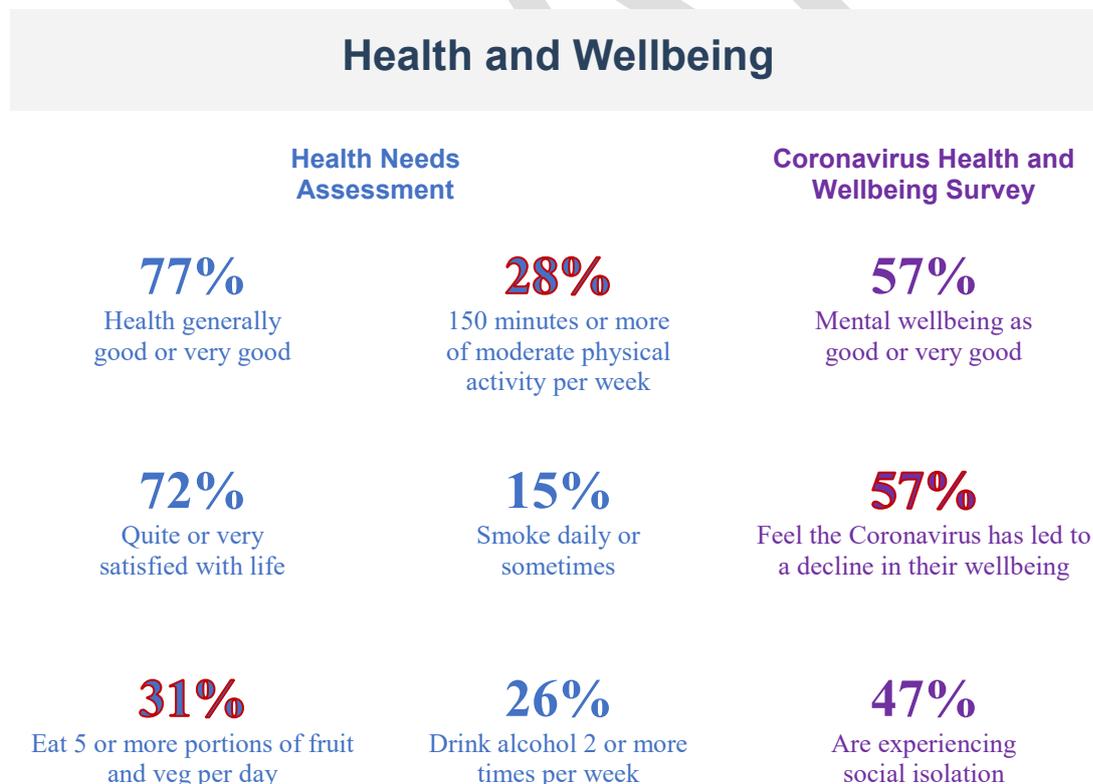
The areas covered in the health needs assessment reflect those included in 'The Corporate Health Standard' which serves as a national mark of quality for health and wellbeing, in the workplace, in Wales. These are essentially what may be termed as 'lifestyle' health behaviours.

Questions around workplace culture were also asked in order to gauge some of the impact the organisation itself may have on an individual's or team's wellbeing. Those with line manager responsibilities were given an additional set of questions to assess their levels of confidence and aptitude, when approaching issues around health and wellbeing, with those they manage. These questions may also help to ascertain any barriers to these activities, which they may perceive to be present.

Coronavirus Health and Wellbeing Survey

A further workforce pulse survey was conducted in December 2020, focussing on the impact of the Coronavirus pandemic on health, wellbeing and working lives. The survey also sought the workforce's thoughts on the information and provision available to them. Staff employed by School Governing Bodies were also invited to take part in the survey. The survey was completed by 18% of the workforce.

Key Findings



Information and Support

Health Needs Assessment

70%

Preferred to receive information and support via email

64%

Quite or very likely to engage in walking activities

60%

Quite or very likely to engage in taster sessions at our leisure facilities

61%

Quite or very likely to engage in physical activity at work if shower/changing facilities available

Coronavirus Health and Wellbeing Survey

69%

Know how and where to access help for their wellbeing

58%

Feel the information they have accessed is supportive and helpful

65%

Felt they had help and support available to them

Culture

Health Needs Assessment

76%

Satisfied or very satisfied with work life

75%

Satisfied or very satisfied with workplace

70%

Agree or strongly agree communication is good

78%

Agree or strongly agree there are opportunities to develop new skills

60%

Found job quite or very stressful

81%

Attended work when they felt that they were too sick to work

Coronavirus Health and Wellbeing Survey

63%

Agree or strongly agree the Council cares about my wellbeing

65%

Agree or strongly agree support available if feeling stressed and anxious at work

Line Management

Health Needs Assessment

88%

Agree or strongly agree can have 1:1 meetings with line manager

Coronavirus Health and Wellbeing Survey

78%

Agree or strongly agree that they have enough contact with their line manager

87%

Agree or strongly agree there are opportunities to develop friendships

74%

Agree or strongly agree team are communicating well and staying connected

71%

Agree or strongly agree they feel listened to

88%

Agree or strongly agree they would be supported to provide care for a family member

The data collected from our workforce highlights the importance of meeting the health and wellbeing needs of our employees. In doing so we need to ensure the provision is relevant, meaningful, responsive and accessible to all the workforce.

This strategy aims to improve not only individual wellbeing but also that of our teams/services, the Council as a whole and the community in which we live and work.

Most importantly, it is only right that we strive to become an employer of choice and that we pro-actively support the wellbeing of our staff - our greatest resource.

6 Pillars of Health and Wellbeing



Positive environments

We will build, improve and maintain positive and supportive working environments across our organisation. This will be achieved with the establishment of governance by the introduction of a Health and Wellbeing steering/working group with representation from across the organisation and a network of wellbeing champions who will foster and promote a supportive working environment. This activity will be co-ordinated by the Employee Health and Wellbeing Officer.

Goals 2021

- We will create and embed a network of wellbeing champions to promote wellbeing across our organisation.
- We will explore the benefits of completing an organisational risk assessment to identify where the stressors are and create an action plan to manage these.
- We will create the governance, including the establishment of a Health and Wellbeing Steering Group (to include representation from Leadership Group, Health and Safety and Trade Unions) around our Health and Wellbeing Strategy, to enable to the development of wellbeing across our organisation.

2023

- We will have embedded our network of Wellbeing champions, who will foster a positive and supportive environment for our employee community.
- They will facilitate and document organisational wellbeing activity, working collaboratively

Policies and practice

We will embed wellbeing in to our HR policies, people practices and leadership and management programmes, putting people as the focus. Our wellbeing strategy will enable managers and leaders to cultivate teams that foster wellbeing. We will build, improve and maintain positive and supportive working environments across our organisation.

Goals

2021

- Wellbeing will be embedded into our leadership and management programmes and also through embedding in our people practices. Our wellbeing strategy will enable managers and leaders to cultivate teams that foster wellbeing.
- We will review our HR policies with the intention of including aspects of wellbeing, making them more accessible and user friendly, putting our people at the heart of our policies.

2023

- Our leadership and management development programmes will have wellbeing at their heart. This will be evidenced in the way that our managers are leading their people.
- The culture across our organisation will be positive and embracing of change and difference
- People will be open to Wellbeing as this will be part of their everyday thinking. They will be able to access the information they need in a way that meets their needs to ensure inclusive provision.

Healthy lifestyles

We will focus on the six aspects of having a healthy lifestyle, as adopted in The Corporate Health Standard (Healthy Working Wales): These are: Tobacco use, Mental health and Wellbeing Musculoskeletal Disorders (MSD) Alcohol, Drugs and Other Substance Use, Food Health and Wellbeing and Physical Activity We will work in partnership with our Wellbeing champions promoting and facilitating healthy lifestyle behaviours through a range of methods and communication channels.

Goals

2021

- We will promote healthy lifestyle behaviours in line with public health messages, this will include online resources and workshops.
- We will partner with Ceredigion Actif, and establish physical activity groups: e.g Yoga, running, walking with the aim of to encourage and enable employees to be more active.
- We will create guidance on how to design, promote and manage physical challenge events for individuals and teams.
- We will promote local partnerships that can support healthy lifestyles to staff and students. These could include health clubs, walking groups, alcohol awareness campaigns and healthy eating initiatives.

2023

- Our healthy lifestyle toolkits will be available to staff. These will include

practical guidance on the six healthy lifestyle areas above.

- Staff will have access to a wellbeing questionnaire that provides them with information and guidance on the areas they need to focus on.
- Our online resources will be used by staff enabling them to make health and lifestyle changes and will sign post to additional support if self-help is not sufficient.
- We will liaise with local smoking cessation services and establish work based smoking cessation services for staff that are ready to stop smoking. Through our smoking cessation campaign in partnership with Help to Quit Wales we will make staff aware of the dangers of smoking and support

Mental health and wellbeing

We will be proactive in encouraging and supporting staff to maintain good mental health. We will sign the Time to Change Wales Pledge, to work towards removing mental health stigma in our organisation. In addition, there will be online toolkits, evidence based training and the implementation of Mental Health First Aiders and Wellbeing champions who will provide support and signposting to expert help and information. We will promote our Employee Assistance Programme (EAP): Care First to staff alongside the provision of a wellbeing 'drop in' service.

Goals 2021

- We will create online Resilience and Stress Toolkits enabling them to access information when they want and need to, enabling them to be 'change ready' and better prepared to cope with life's transitions.
- We will deliver evidence based training around mental health, including Mental Health First Aid and health promotion to our network of wellbeing champions and provide signposting information.
- We will promote our Employee Assistance Programme (EAP): Care First to staff alongside the provision of a wellbeing 'drop in' service.
- We will sign the Time to Change Wales Pledge, to work towards removing mental health stigma in our organisation, creating a Time to Change Action Plan for which will be embedded across the organisation.
- We will create a network of Mental Health First Aiders across our organisation.

2023

- We will have culture where more people feel able to talk openly about their mental health as they do physical health. We will feel able to disclose mental health problems without fear.
- Stigma around mental health will reduce as we work through our action plan following the signing of the Time to Change Wales pledge.

Culture and behaviour

We will embed workplace health promotion to foster a culture that enables support. Our wellbeing champions will be provided with health promotion training enabling them to promote public health messages in their work areas. We will achieve 'The Corporate Health Standard' (Bronze) awarded by Healthy Working Wales ensuring that we follow best practice.

Goals

2021

- We will provide our wellbeing champions with health promotion training enabling them to promote public health messages in their work areas. This will include signposting to behaviour change support and awareness in areas such as alcohol use, smoking, nutrition and healthy eating, weight management and exercise.
- We will achieve 'The Corporate Health Standard' (Bronze) awarded by Healthy Working Wales ensuring that we follow best practice. This is an evidenced based award scheme endorsed by Public Health Wales. We will deliver at least four health campaigns a year, focusing on key health initiatives.

2023

- Our health and wellbeing intranet pages will be dynamic, enabling our community to access health promotion messages and self-help tools alongside signposting to support both inside and outside of our organisation.
- Our Wellbeing champions will support people that are ready to make positive changes through effective signposting and knowledge of support available.
- Our Health and Wellbeing campaigns will be of high value for people to get involved with, for the benefit of themselves, their teams and for our organisation as a whole.

7 Roles and Responsibilities

Leadership Group

To support and champion the strategy.

To secure organisation-wide 'buy in' by endorsing the strategy and validating its importance in ensuring wellbeing and its associated benefits for both individuals and the organisation as a whole.

These actions will aid in overcoming organisational barriers, secure investment into resources, embed it in core business, prioritise it as a strategic investment and promote organisation-wide engagement.



Health and Wellbeing Steering/Working Group

The group will be part of the wellbeing governance required to aid the success of the Strategy. It will bring together key stakeholders across Ceredigion County Council and will include a representative from Leadership Group, Employee Health and Wellbeing Officer and Trade Union representation.

It will provide guidance and reassurance to all stakeholders in relation to the health and wellbeing strategy aims.

The group will not merely exist as a consultative forum, but will be established to ensure that significant actions are identified and implemented in such a way as the Council can demonstrate that health and wellbeing are being effectively managed as a strategic priority.

It will facilitate a focused approach to wellbeing which will foster innovation, creativity, productivity and engagement in our organisation.

Health and wellbeing champions

A network of champions made up of individuals from across the organisation will be established. Their role will be:

- to support the Health and Wellbeing Strategy, by promoting activities in their areas, encouraging colleagues to access relevant health and wellbeing opportunities, collating activity data, sharing best practice and stories of success.
- to foster a positive and supportive environment across the Council.
- to facilitate and document local wellbeing activity, working collaboratively with other wellbeing champions across the organisation, reporting to the Employee Health and Wellbeing Officer.

Line Managers

The role of line managers in the implementation of the Strategy will be key. They will need to demonstrate the value of the strategy to staff across the organisation.

Leaders and managers will be expected to role model wellbeing as they have a pivotal role in creating a wellbeing culture.

They will be required to utilise good communication and effective leadership to enable the positive change and a cultural shift to facilitate/contribute to the success of the Strategy.

Employees

The Strategy is not a prescriptive resource so individual employees will still have a responsibility for their own health and wellbeing as well as that of their colleagues.

Individuals need to be able to recognise what constitutes their wellbeing and the role it plays in enabling them to lead an enriching and balanced life.

Through the mechanisms of the strategy the individual employee will/should be afforded the opportunity to make choices which prioritise their wellbeing.

8 Measuring Success

Success is not one dimensional and there are multiple metrics, factors and aspects to consider within both the organisational and wellbeing context. Therefore, a robust process is required to continually reflect upon and review the delivery of this strategy, utilising both qualitative and quantitative data, and through continual dialogue with staff, managers and other stakeholders.

We will use measures and methods, examples of which are listed, against which we will set tangible targets, to monitor progress.

- A Health and Wellbeing survey to be conducted annually.
- The inclusion of specific Ceredigion health and wellbeing question(s) within staff survey.
- Staff survey and pulse survey findings to improve over the lifespan of the strategy.
- An increase in engagement in the Health and Wellbeing staff survey.
- We will use our absence data to create a baseline and report against this annually.
- Monitoring uptake of health and wellbeing drop in sessions and referrals to Occupational Health.
- Usage of the Employee Assistance Programme.
- Achieving Corporate Health Standard Bronze Award (in the first instance). Commitment to progress to higher award levels.
- Quarterly data collection from Wellbeing champions and Mental Health First Aiders
- Share our 'Time to Change' initiative action plan which aims to remove mental ill-health stigma.
- Once the Pledge has been signed we will then be measured against the action plan.

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Cyngor Sir CEREDIGION County Council

REPORT TO: Corporate Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee

DATE: 7 July 2021

LOCATION: Virtual meeting

TITLE: Draft Forward Work Programme 2021/22

PURPOSE OF REPORT: Review the current work programme of the Committee

REASON SCRUTINY HAVE REQUESTED THE INFORMATION: The forward work programme of the Committee is reviewed and updated at each meeting

BACKGROUND:

Overview and Scrutiny Committees oversee the work of the Council to make sure that it delivers services in the best way and for the benefit of the local community.

The role of Overview and Scrutiny is to look at the services and issues that affect people in Ceredigion. The process provides the opportunity for Councillors to examine the various functions of the council, to ask questions on how decisions have been made, to consider whether service improvements can be put in place and to make recommendations to this effect.

Scrutiny plays an essential role in promoting accountability, efficiency and effectiveness in the Council's decision making process and the way in which it delivers services.

The main roles of the Overview and Scrutiny Committees:

- Holding the cabinet and officers as decision-makers to account
- Being a 'critical friend', through questioning how decisions have been made to provide a 'check and balance' to decision makers, adding legitimacy to the decision making process
- Undertaking reviews of council services and policy
- Undertaking reviews to develop council services and policies
- Considering any other matter that affects the county
- Ensuring that Ceredigion is performing to the best of its ability and delivering high quality services to its citizens
- Assessing the impact of the Council's policies on local communities and recommending improvement
- Engaging with the public to develop citizen centred policies and services

Effective Overview and Scrutiny can lead to:

- Better decision making
- Improved Service Delivery and Performance
- Robust Policy Development arising from public consultation and input of independent expertise
- Enhanced Democracy, Inclusiveness, Community Leadership and Engagement
- Adds a clear dimension of transparency and accountability to the political workings of the Council
- Provides an opportunity for all Members to develop specialist skills and knowledge that can benefit future policy making and performance monitoring processes
- Creates a culture of evidence based self-challenge

CURRENT SITUATION:

Questions to consider when choosing topics

- Is there a clear objective for examining this topic?
- Are you likely to achieve a desired outcome?
- What are the likely benefits to the Council and the citizens of Ceredigion?
- Is the issue significant?
- Are there links to the Corporate Strategy
- Is it a key issue to the public?
- Have the issues been raised by external audit?
- Is it a poor performing service?

Choosing topics

Overview and Scrutiny Committees should consider information from the Corporate Strategy, Improvement Plan, Strategic Plan, Service Plans, the Corporate Risk Register, budget savings – proposals and impact, Quarterly Corporate Performance Management panel meetings and departmental input in choosing topics and designing their Forward Work Programmes, as well as any continuing work.

RECOMMENDATION (S):

To review and update the current Forward Work Programme.

Contact Name:	Dwynwen Jones
Designation:	Overview and Scrutiny Officer
Date of Report:	27 June 2021
Acronyms:	FWP – Forward Work Programme

Committee	Item (description/title)	Invited Speakers	Purpose i.e. monitoring, policy, recommendation
Corporate Resources			
13 May Special Meeting	Driving at Work Policy Carers' Policy Managing slurry on County Farms	Geraint Edwards Geraint Edwards Russell Hughes-Pickering	Pre-Cabinet Pre-Cabinet Requested by Committee and Thriving Members during Budget meeting
7 July 2021	Corporate Concerns & Complaints Policy Health and Wellbeing Strategy	Marie-Neige Hadfield Geraint Edwards	Pre-Cabinet Pre-Cabinet
14 October 2021	A report on Poverty during the pandemic to include the Hardship Strategy Digital Connectivity Talking, Listening and Working Together, Draft Engagement Policy of Ceredigion County Council	Sian Howys Diana Davies Cathryn Morgan David Owen Michael Smith	Requested by Members Pre-Cabinet

**Minutes of a Meeting of the
CORPORATE RESOURCES OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE held
remotely by video-conference on Wednesday, 25 November 2020**

PRESENT: Councillor Keith Evans (Chairman), Councillors John Adams-Lewis, Bryan Davies, Ceredig Davies, Peter Davies MBE, Ifan Davies, Endaf Edwards, Elizabeth Evans, Lyndon Lloyd MBE, Dai Mason, Dan Potter, Rowland Rees-Evans, Lynford Thomas, Wyn Thomas and Ivor Williams

Also in attendance: Councillors Rhodri Evans, Gareth Lloyd and Ray Quant MBE (Cabinet Members)

Officers in attendance: Ms Marie Neige- Hadfield- Corporate Complaints and Freedom of Information Manager, Mrs Diana Davies- Corporate Manager – Partnerships& Performance, Mr Alun Williams- CLO- Policy & Performance, Mrs Caroline Lewis - Corporate Lead Officer, People & Organisation Service, Ms Debbie Ayriss- Learning & Development Manager, Mrs Ann Ireland- Corporate Manager Revenues and Financial Assessments, Mr Arwyn Morris- CLO- Customer Contact, Mrs Joy Lake- Corporate Manger – Clic, ICT & Customer Services, Miss Anna Gawthorpe –Customer Services Manager, Mr Alan Morris – Corporate Manager ICT, Mr Arwyn Davies – Corporate Manger – Growth and Enterprise Mr David Owen –Digital Development Officer, Mrs Dwynwen Jones, Scrutiny Officer and Mrs Dana Jones, Democratic Services and Standards Officer

Other Officers in attendance – Mr Peter Williams (Welsh Government)

(10:00am- 12:40pm)

1 Apologies

Councillor Gareth Davies together with Mr Alun Williams, Ms Nia Jones and Mrs Lisa Evans apologised for their inability to attend the meeting.

2 Disclosures of Personal / Prejudicial Interests

Councillor John Adams- Lewis, Bryan Davies, Ifan Davies, Dan Potter and Rowland Rees-Evans declared a personal and prejudicial interest in Enclosure C- Draft Non-Domestic Rates Policy Framework for Mandatory, Discretionary and Hardship Rate Relief

Councillor Ceredig Davies declared a personal interest in Enclosure C- Draft Non-Domestic Rates Policy Framework for Mandatory, Discretionary and Hardship Rate Relief

3 Annual Report of Complaints, Compliments and Freedom of Information Activity – 2019/2020

Consideration was given to the Report of the Complaints and Freedom of Information Manager on the Annual Report of Complaints, Compliments and Freedom of Information Activity – 2019/2020. The report had been presented in order to provide the Committee with a comprehensive overview of the compliments, complaints and Freedom of Information (FOI) activity received by the Authority in the previous financial year. This report also provides information on complaints referred to the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales during the period.

Following questions from the floor, it was AGREED:-

- (i) to note the contents of this report in advance of its presentation at the Council meeting on 10th December 2020.; and
- (ii) congratulate the service on their work

4 Social Care Wales Workforce Development Programme (SCWWDP)

Consideration was given to the Report of the Corporate Lead Officer, People & Organisation Service updating Members on the Social Care Wales Workforce Development Programme (SCWWDP).

It was reported that due to Covid, in March 2020 all face to face training delivery was suspended. Gold Command approval was subsequently sought to deliver the essential face to face manual handling training required by frontline social care workers which was now being delivered in accordance with all Covid restrictions and guidance.

Several e learning programmes were developed to support internal and external frontline and redeployed workers including 'An introduction to Social Care & Personal Care' and 'Infection Prevention & Control'. The learning and development team had received positive feedback from both internal and external providers on the support Ceredigion Council had provided to the sector over this period.

All other training has been adapted for on line delivery and was delivered either by internal trainers from the learning and development team or by commissioned providers. On line training delivery appears to have widened accessibility, with increasing numbers of participants from across the sector joining events or completing e learning programmes. The experience and learning from this period would inform the future delivery and methodology of learning and development opportunities for the future. The learning and development team currently plans to maintain on line training delivery until April 2021 when the situation would be reviewed to take account of Covid restrictions and guidance

Following question from the floor, it was AGREED to note the current position and to thank the Learning and Development Team on their work on this programme.

5 Draft Non-Domestic Rates Policy Framework for Mandatory, Discretionary and Hardship Rate Relief

Consideration was given to the Draft Non- Domestic Rates Policy Framework for Mandatory Discretionary and Hardship Rate Relief. The report had been presented as there was a need to review and update the existing policy. This was in order to ensure that the policy was updated in line with the Wales Audit Office requirements. Also to provide Members, Officers and Business Ratepayers with the legislative framework and eligibility criteria to be met within Ceredigion when awarding Mandatory, Discretionary and Hardship Rate Relief.

Following discussion, it was AGREED to recommend that the draft Non-Domestic Rates Policy Framework for Mandatory, Discretionary and Hardship Rate Relief to be presented to the Cabinet for approval.

6 Impact of Covid-19 on ICT and Customer Services

Consideration was given to the Report of the Corporate Lead Officer – Customer Contact upon the Impact of Covid-19 on ICT and Customer Services. Details of all their work since the 23rd March 2020 when both ICT and Customer services had maintained a full service with the majority of staff working from home was provided.

Following questions from the floor, it was AGREED to accept the report for information and to thank the service and to all staff for adapting to a new way of working during this time.

7 Digital Connectivity

Consideration was given to the report upon Digital Connectivity. The report had been presented in order provide an overview of the initiatives and projects that Ceredigion County Council are currently undertaking to support the levels of digital connectivity across the County . The officer proceeded to provide a power point presentation on the content of the report and the following information was outlined:-

- Context for Work
- Current connectivity
- Objectives
- Current activity
- Fibre to the Premises
- LoRaWan Network
- Winter Gritting
- LoRaWAN Dashboard

Mr Peter Williams, Welsh Government also provided an update on their involvement in relation to Digital Connectivity.

Following questions from the floor, it was AGREED to note the current position and to thank all officers involved in the digital initiatives and projects within Ceredigion.

8 To confirm Minutes of the Meeting of the Corporate Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting held on the 13 February 2020, 26 February 2020 and 16 March 2020

It was AGREED to confirm as a true record the Minutes of the Meetings held on the 13 February 2020, 26 February 2020 and 16 March 2020

9 Draft Forward Work Programme 2020/21

It was AGREED to note the draft Forward Work Programme 2020/21 as presented subject to the following:-

(i) that external mobile phone providers possibly attend the next meeting of the committee;

(ii) Update on County Farms which was already on the FWP;

(iii) that the dates of future committee meetings were yet to be confirmed; and

(vi) that a meeting was due to be held with other chairs of the Overview and Scrutiny Committees and Officers to discuss their Forward Work Programme

Confirmed at the Meeting of the Committee held on xxxx

Chairman:- _____

Date:- _____

**Minutes of a meeting of the CORPORATE RESOURCES OVERVIEW &
SCRUTINY COMMITTEE held remotely by video conferencing on
Friday, 19 February 2021**

Present: Councillor Keith Evans (Chairman), Councillors Ivor Williams, Peter Davies MBE, Bryan Davies, Ceredig Davies, Gareth Davies, Endaf Edwards, Ifan Davies, Dai Mason, Elizabeth Evans, John Adams-Lewis, Matthew Woolfall-Jones, Rowland Rees-Evans, Lynford Thomas, Lyndon Lloyd MBE, Wyn Thomas.

Also Present: Councillor Ellen ap Gwynn (Leader of the Council), Councillors Catrin Miles, Dafydd Edwards, Rhodri Evans, Catherine Hughes, Gareth Lloyd, Ray Quant MBE, Alun Williams (Cabinet Members), Councillors John Roberts and Euros Davies (Non-Committee Members).

Officers present: Eifion Evans, (Chief Executive); Barry Rees, (Corporate Director); Stephen Johnson, (Corporate Lead Officer Finance and Procurement); Duncan Hall, (Corporate Manager Service Finance and Accounts); Justin Davies, (Corporate Manager, Core Finance); Lowri Edwards, (Corporate Lead Officer, Democratic Services); Arwyn Morris, (Corporate Lead Officer, Customer Contact); Caroline Lewis, (Corporate Director); Geraint Edwards, Corporate Lead Officer, People and Organisation); Elin Prysor, (Corporate Lead Officer, Legal and Governance); Alun Williams, (Corporate Lead Officer, Policy and Performance); Russell Hughes-Pickering, (Corporate Lead Officer, Economy and Regeneration); George Ryley, (Corporate Manager, Procurement and Payments); Dwynwen Jones, (Overview and Scrutiny Officer); Nia Jones, (Corporate Manager, Democratic Services).

(13:30pm – 15:45pm)

1 Apologies

Councillor Dan Potter apologised for his inability to attend the meeting.

2 Disclosures of Personal / Prejudicial Interests.

There were no disclosures of personal / prejudicial interests.

3 To consider the draft Budget being recommended by Cabinet for 2021/2022 relevant to the Corporate Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Councillor Keith Evans, Committee Chair, outlined the meeting procedure and welcomed the Leader of the Council, Councillor Ellen ap Gwynn, Cabinet Members and Officers to the meeting.

Councillor Ellen ap Gwynn, Leader of the Council, presented the budget report outlining the current position. Councillor ap Gwynn explained that the Local Government Revenue and Capital Final Settlement is not due until the 2nd March, 2021. Any changes to the provisional settlement with therefore need to be reflected and adjusted.

The Council Tax base setting report was approved by Cabinet on the 1st December 2020 with details returned to Welsh Government to feed into the settlement calculations. Councillor ap Gwynn stated that the total revenue settlement, known as the Aggregate External Finance (AEF), allocated to Ceredigion for 2021/22 is

£109,658k compared with 2020/21 £107,646k being an increase of 2%, which is the lowest increase in Wales. Wales as a whole has seen an average increase of 3.8%.

The detailed assessment work carried out to identify the unavoidable cost pressures faced by Services has been finalised, identifying a net total amount of £6.9m, which is summarised in Enclosure B of the agenda papers. The most significant cost pressures relate to Porth Cynnal (£2.5m) and Porth Gofal (£1.1m). Social Care related budgets continue to come under significant strain, as reflected in both the current and previous year financial position. Provision for pay inflation (1% plus an additional £250 for staff earning under £24k pa) is also a significant factor at £2.2m, although currently there is no formal agreement yet on 2021/22 pay awards.

Councillor ap Gwynn also advised the Committee that last year it was reported that it was not clear if, or when, the current increased Social Care spending would reduce to a level closer to that of 2 years ago. The new “through age” Porth Ceredigion service delivery structure is still in its infancy and is continuing to be implemented and developed and the impact of this will need to be fully assessed in due course. Due to the pandemic this work has understandably seen slower than planned progress due to the need to prioritise critical service delivery. Therefore the temporary loan amount of £1.35m, provided in the 2020/21 base budget, has not been able to be planned for repayment and will therefore remain in the base budget. The financial impact arising from the Covid-19 pandemic for the current year, is projected to result in an additional cost to the Council. This is currently forecast at £1.6m (although the final position could still be lower, or higher than this estimate).

The Leader also explained that a Council Tax increase of 3.5% raises a gross £1.5m, which equates to a net £1.3m, after allowing for the additional requirements placed on the Council Tax Reduction scheme. The Council's Income and Cost Recovery policy ensures that services are continuing to recover their inflationary costs relevant to chargeable services from service users, although the current issue in the near term is ensuring the recovery of income streams to pre Covid-19 levels.

The Chairman thanked the Leader for presenting the report and welcomed questions from Members.

There were no questions and therefore Members agreed to accept the report as presented.

The relevant Cabinet Member then presented the information relevant to their Service Area (shown in Appendix B of the agenda papers). Members were then given the opportunity for questions which were answered in turn by Officers.

Committee Members considered the service budgets for those service areas that are within the Committee's remit; namely:

- Customer Contact - £57k
- Democratic Services - £31k
- Economy and Regeneration - £34k
- Finance and Procurement - £51k
- Legal and Governance - £15k
- People & Organisation Service - £21k
- Policy, Performance and Public Protection - £10.5k

During discussions, the following points were raised:

- Some Members raised concern with a proposal of reviewing cash collection service in Cash Offices for Council services. Many of Ceredigion residents only use cash and have no other means of payment. In response, it was confirmed that the Authority has no intention of terminating the use of cash payments in those Offices;
- In response to a question regarding travelling cost savings, it was confirmed that this relates to Democratic Services Officers only;
- A Member enquired whether monies had been allocated in the budget for the possible future cost pressures for replacing slurry storage in the Authority's County Farms. It was confirmed that Ministers are debating whether the NVZ rules will apply or not at the Senedd on the 3rd March 2021. It was agreed that everyone should be mindful of this;
- Concern was raised in regards to the increase in the number of claimants for the Council Tax Support Scheme due to Covid-19. It was confirmed that earmarked reserves is available to fund one off pressures should this be the case. It was also confirmed that the Authority's collection rate is good at this current time. The Leader advised Committee Members that this matter is raised and discussed regularly at the All Wales Leader meetings and that the message is relayed to the Welsh Government that increased funding is required to support residents through the current climate;
- The Policy, Performance budget proposal outlined two options for the Committee to Consider as follows:
 1. To reduce our civil contingencies budget; or;
 2. To reduce the policy support budget.

Both options will require a loss of 0.2 FTE from either team.

Following consideration Members did not favour one option over the other.

The Chairman thanked the Cabinet Members for presenting the report in a concise and clear manner.

The relevant Cabinet Member then presented the proposed Fees and Charges as outlined in Enclosure C, Appendix 1 of the agenda papers, (pages 45-51 of 51).

During discussion, the following was noted:

- A Committee Member referred to page 51, fee for change of house name, stating that it would be beneficial for the Committee to receive statistical information in relation to the number of requests received in past years. An Officer confirmed that the majority of requests received are to change a house name from the English to Welsh. The Leader confirmed that this is often discussed at the Language Committee and when a request is received to change a house name from Welsh to English, a letter is sent to the occupiers providing information relating to the history of its current Welsh house name. In most cases, the occupiers have withdrawn the name change request. The Leader advised Committee Members that this had been recognised and mentioned at a recent Senedd meeting. Members were pleased and congratulated the Leader and Officers for this achievement.

The Chairman thanked the Leader, the Cabinet Members and Officers for the information received at the meeting, and asked Committee Members to vote in turn if they accept, are against, or abstain from the following recommendations:

1. To consider the relevant Budget, Cost pressures and Cost reduction/savings proposals required for 2021/22;
2. To consider the relevant Fees and charges proposed for 2021/22;
3. To consider the relevant Capital schemes in the proposed Capital Programme; and;
4. To provide any other appropriate Draft Budget related feedback to Cabinet.

A Committee Member put forward a recommendation to Cabinet which was seconded and agreed by Committee Members as follows:

- Committee Members recommend that the Leader of the Council and the Cabinet review their decision on the basis that any amendments to the provisional Revenue Settlement Grant (RSG) would be absorbed by the Leadership Group Corporate Revenue Budget; and;
- Committee Members recommend that the Leader of the Council and the Cabinet gives further consideration to the allocation of any possible increase in the RSG.

RECOMMENDATION

Following consideration, Members agreed to recommend that Cabinet:

1. **APPROVE** the relevant Budget, Cost pressures and Cost reduction/savings proposals required for 2021/22
2. **APPROVE** the relevant Fees and charges proposed for 2021/22; and
3. **APPROVE** the relevant Capital schemes in the proposed Capital Programme.

Subject to consideration of the following:

- Committee Members recommend that the Leader of the Council and the Cabinet review their decision:
 - I. (Cabinet 2/2/21 C132 relating to Recommendation (v), and
 - II. Recommendation (e) contained in the report on draft budget 2021/22 (Enclosure A) (page 11)
 on the basis that any amendments to the provisional Revenue Settlement Grant (RSG) would be absorbed by the Leadership Group Corporate Revenue Budget; and;
- Committee Members recommend that the Leader of the Council and the Cabinet gives further consideration to the allocation of any possible increase in the RSG.

The Chairman thanked the Leader of the Council, Cabinet Members and Officers for preparing reports and presenting the information at the meeting. The Chairman also thanked the Overview and Scrutiny Officer and the Democratic Services Team for their support before and during the meeting.

The Chairman wished everyone well and terminated the meeting.

Confirmed at the Meeting of the Committee held on xxxxxx

Chairman:-_____

Date:-_____

Minutes of a Special Meeting of the Corporate Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee held remotely via video-conferencing on Thursday, 18th March 2021

Present: Councillors John Adams-Lewis, Bryan Davies, Ceredig Davies, Gareth Davies, Peter Davies, Elizabeth Evans, Keith Evans, Lyndon Lloyd MBE, Dai Mason, Dan Potter, Rowland Rees-Evans, Lynford Thomas, Wyn Thomas, Ivor Williams and Matthew Woolfall-Jones

1.20pm – 1.25pm

- 1 **Apologies**
Councillors Ifan Davies and Endaf Edwards apologised for their inability to attend the meeting.

- 2 **Disclosure of Personal / Prejudicial Interests (including Whipping declarations)**
There were no disclosures of personal / prejudicial interests.

- 3 **Elect a Chairman for the Committee for the 2021/22 municipal year, with effect from 15th May 2021**
It was proposed by Councillor Keith Evans and seconded by Councillor Dan Potter and unanimously **RESOLVED** that Councillor Ivor Williams be elected Chairman of the Corporate Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee for the 2021/22 municipal year.

- 4 **Elect a Vice-Chairman for the Committee for the 2021/22 municipal year, with effect from 15th May 2021**
It was proposed by Councillor Keith Evans and seconded by Councillor Ivor Williams and unanimously **RESOLVED** that Councillor Dan Potter be elected Vice-Chairman of the Corporate Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee for the 2021/22 municipal year.

Confirmed at the meeting of the Committee held on xxxx 2021

Chairman:

**Minutes of a meeting of the CORPORATE RESOURCES OVERVIEW &
SCRUTINY COMMITTEE held remotely by video conferencing on
Thursday, 13 May 2021**

Present: Councillor Keith Evans (Chairman), Councillors Ivor Williams, Peter Davies MBE, Bryan Davies, Ceredig Davies, Gareth Davies, Endaf Edwards, Ifan Davies, Elizabeth Evans, John Adams-Lewis, Dai Mason, Dan Potter, Rowland Rees-Evans, Lynford Thomas, Lyndon Lloyd MBE, Wyn Thomas.

Also Present: Councillors Rhodri Evans, Catherine Hughes, Gareth Lloyd and Ray Quant MBE.

Officers present: Caroline Lewis, (Corporate Director); Geraint Edwards, (Corporate Lead Officer, People and Organisation); Russell Hughes-Pickering, (Corporate Lead Officer, Economy and Regeneration); Arwyn Davies, (Corporate Manager Growth and Enterprise); Andrew Harries, (Principal Estates Officer); Dwynwen Jones, (Overview and Scrutiny Officer); Nia Jones, (Corporate Manager, Democratic Services); Kay Davies, (Democratic Services Officer).

(10:00am – 11.30am)

1. Apologies

No apologies were received.

2. Disclosures of Personal / Prejudicial Interests.

There were no disclosures of personal / prejudicial interests.

3. Carers' Policy

The policy has been subject to consultation with the relevant Trade Unions, their amendments have been incorporated where appropriate and has subsequently been agreed. The purpose of the new Carers' policy is to set out the Council's procedures for recognising and supporting employees who undertake significant caring responsibilities alongside their paid employment.

The Policy sets out the support already available to carers as employees of Ceredigion County Council such as flexible working options, time off for dependents (unpaid), parental leave (unpaid), support from the Carers Unit and the services provided by our employee assistance programme, Care First.

The policy also introduces further additional support for working carers with the aim of retaining their services in the long term:

- Carers' passport - a document which recognises caring responsibilities and is transferrable if the employee changes role; and
- Carers' Leave – an entitlement, for those employees who hold a Carers' Passport, of up to 5 days paid Carers Leave in any 12 month rolling period to undertake their caring responsibility.
- The creation of a Carers' Network for Council employees

Mr Geraint Edwards, Corporate Lead Officer for People and Organisation was thanked for his presentation of the report. Members welcomed the policy and the opportunity for discussion. The following points were raised:

- i. It would be useful to include a contact telephone number in the policy document as not all users have access to online services.
- ii. It was proposed that the policy should note that all carers have a right to a needs assessment by social workers.

- iii. It would also be useful to include information in relation to sources of financial help available to carers and the person being cared for.
- iv. Flexible working from home is also a benefit which may be helpful to carers. Most staff members have worked from home since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic and this has shown to be effective.

The Corporate Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee agreed to recommend the approval of the Carers' Policy by Cabinet subject to consideration of the following:

- to include a contact telephone number for Ceredigion County Council Carers' Unit in point 11.2 and external contact in Section 6 of the policy as some individuals may not have access to the internet;
- to insert a paragraph in the policy referring to homeworking during the pandemic and how this could be a possible option for individuals for future flexible working; and
- to reference the fact that it is a statutory duty to offer Carers a Carers Assessment.

4. County Farms- Environmental Regulations

The Corporate Manager for Growth and Enterprise, Arwyn Davies presented the report in order to outline issues arising from the new Control of Agricultural Pollution Regulations, and to share early options and the steps required to address the challenges. The report provides a background to the Council Farm holdings policy in Wales and the Ceredigion County Council Farm Estate along with a brief synopsis of the farms that form part of the council estate.

Ceredigion County Council has commissioned an analysis of the compliance status of the 12 farms against the SSAFO (Silage, Slurry and Agricultural Fuel Oil Regulations 2010 and the future Agricultural Pollution Prevention Regulations.

The Welsh Government previously advised that the proposed Agricultural Pollution Prevention standards were due to come into force by January 2020. The SSAFO regulations require 4 months slurry storage capacity. Every farm was visited to carry out broad assessments against the SSAFO standards. Further detailed assessments would be required in some cases, for example to carry out detailed calculations of slurry / dirty water storage capacity.

Following the visits, existing or potential problems have been identified in nine of the 12 farms. Some would require significant structural work to remedy, whilst others would require a change in management systems (e.g. from cubicle / slurry systems to loose housing / straw –based systems) or more minor structural work (e.g. to avoid clean water being contaminated).

On 27 January 2021 the Minister for Environment, Energy and Rural Affairs announced the introduction of regulatory measures to address agricultural pollution in Wales, the Water Resources (Control of Agricultural Pollution) (Wales) Regulations 2021. will apply from 1 April 2021 for an initial set of measurements. The remainder will be phased in over a period of 3 years. The Regulations focus on those

farms where the environmental risk from poor manure management is greatest. They are based on current good practice recommendations, so some farmers will see minimal impact, particularly those already following good practice and those not producing slurry, such as sheep farmers, whilst others will need time and support to become compliant.

The regulations include the following requirements:

- Nutrient management planning;
- Sustainable fertiliser applications linked to the requirement of the crop;
- Protection of water from pollution related to when, where and how fertilisers are spread; and
- Manure and silage storage standards

The regulations are subject to a legal challenge from the industry, and a new government may review them, but it is likely that some form of tighter control of pollution will be implemented in future, whether these regulations will be implemented in full or not.

Some farms will not comply with the proposed new regulations, and investment will be required to enable those farms to meet the requirements of the regulations. The extent of the investment has not yet been determined, and will depend on a number of factors (e.g. land use on the farms, nature of the tenancies).

It is likely that capital investment will be required in slurry storage capacity, but other options are also being investigated which includes:

- Feasibility into AD / Controlled Environment Agriculture solutions – generating heat / electricity for use in vegetable production – potential demonstration farm status.
- Potential 'UK Research and Innovation Challenge Fund' or Community Renewal
- Fund proposals into broader mitigation (e.g. Blue Flag Agriculture project), looking at technology solutions – County Farms offered as part of a test bed for the innovative challenge.

These potential alternative investment approaches will need to be developed alongside Welsh Government policy teams to ensure that they can be viewed as genuine viable solutions. The approaches will position Ceredigion County Council as being at the forefront of seeking real-life useful solutions.

Moving forward will include the following:

- Communication with each farm (particularly the 9 potentially impacted farms)
- Revenue funding required (circa £30k) to develop a detailed implementation plan for each farm.
- Feed results into the Capital programme discussions within CCC, and to further assess the options for each farm and for the Estate generally.

During discussion the following points were noted:

- i. All County Farms have individual tenancy agreements some dating back several years. Where there are renewals, farms are now rented out on a Farm Business Tenancy agreement.
- ii. Obligations in relation to slurry waste fall, in the main, on the Council as a land lord.
- iii. It was proposed that farms may take advantage of free of charge scheme (one-hour consultations) available to farmers by private agencies thus removing the need for the Council to pay the quoted £30k for the assessments. However, it was noted whilst all farms would be encouraged to take advantage of the opportunity for free assessments, the Council would still need their own independent assessments.
- iv. It was noted that the Council, along with the Centre for Research, Business and Innovation have submitted a bid for the Welsh Government Challenge Fund for funding to enable them to explore innovative ideas and initiatives of which County farms would be part of the process.
- v. Many Members agreed that safeguarding the future of Council owned farms is important in order to help young people who wish to enter the industry.

The Corporate Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee agreed to re-form the Task and Finish Group as soon as possible, under the chairmanship of Councillor Peter Davies, MBE. Financial liability to the Council, advising tenant farmers to seek free assessments from agencies, awareness of time constraints and the importance of the Welsh language and culture in rural areas are all to be considered.

5. Any other business matters

The Chair of the Corporate Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee, Councillor Keith Evans noted, that as this would be his final meeting as Committee chair, he wished to thank Dwynwen Jones, Scrutiny Officer for her support during the last two years. He also thanked the Democratic Services team, translators, officers, the Vice Chair, Councillor Ivor Williams, all Committee and Cabinet members.

Confirmed at the Meeting of the Committee held on xxxxxx

Chairman:- _____

Date:- _____