

**Minutes of the Meeting of the Healthier Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee held at the Council Chamber, Neuadd Cyngor Ceredigion, Penmorfa, Aberaeron and remotely on Wednesday, 22 November 2023**

**Present:** Councillor Caryl Roberts (Chair), Councillors Ceris Jones (Vice-Chair), Amanda Edwards, Elaine Evans, Eryl Evans, Keith Evans, Wyn Evans, Gwyn James, Sian Maehrlein, Ann Bowen Morgan, Mark Strong & Carl Worrall.

**Also in attendance:** Councillors Ifan Davies, Raymond Evans, Rhodri Evans & Gareth Lloyd.

**Cabinet Members present:** Councillor Bryan Davies & Alun Williams.

**Officers in attendance:** Alun Williams, Corporate Lead Officer: Policy, Performance and Public Protection; Carwen Evans, Corporate Manager, Public Protection; Heddwyn Evans, Environmental Health Manager; Donna Pritchard, Corporate Lead Officer, Porth Gofal; Nerys Lewis, Corporate Manager, Direct Services; Helen Harries, Project Support Officer; Wendy Cushley, Business Solutions Officer; Audrey Somerton-Edwards, Interim Corporate Lead Officer: Porth Cynnal and Statutory Director of Social Services; Elizabeth Upcott, Corporate Manager, Safeguarding; Lowri Edwards, Corporate Lead Officer: Democratic Services; Dwywen Jones, Overview and Scrutiny Officer & Neris Morgans, Democratic Services Officer.

(10.00am- 12.06pm)

**1 Welcome and Apologies**

- i. Councillors John Roberts and Matthew Vaux (Cabinet Member) apologised for their inability to attend the meeting.
- ii. Councillor Keith Evans apologised for having to leave the meeting early due to other Council commitments.
- iii. Best wishes were extended to Councillor John Roberts following a recent illness. In addition, condolences were extended to Councillor John Roberts and family on the loss of his granddaughter.
- iv. Best wishes were extended to Councillor Wyn Evans on celebrating a special birthday recently.

**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.**

- i. Councillor Wyn Evans declared a personal and prejudicial interest in item 3 and withdrew from the meeting and a personal interest in item 4.
- ii. Councillor Eryl Evans declared a personal interest in item 3.
- iii. Councillor Sian Maehrlein declared a personal interest in item 6.

## **Procedure**

It was agreed that agenda item 8 be considered prior to agenda item 6 shown on the agenda papers.

### **3 Report on the delivery of food hygiene standards and animal feed inspections in Ceredigion**

Councillor Bryan Davies (Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Democratic Services, Policy, Performance and People and Organisation) presented the report on behalf of Councillor Matthew Vaux (Cabinet Member for Partnerships, Housing, Legal and Governance and Public Protection). The regulatory controls related to food and feed were critical to ensure the safety of food, and the integrity of the food chain from farm to fork. It was important that regulatory controls were consistently applied across the whole of the UK, to ensure there was no breakdown in standards in the food chain that could affect the integrity and confidence of consumers in the food they consumed. The feed chain integrity was critical not only to animal welfare but also to avoid any harmful residues in feed that may affect any animal entering the human food chain.

The Food Standards Agency (FSA) published Codes of Practice that regulated how local authorities delivered their food and feed services. This required that all local authorities were sufficiently resourced to inspect food and feed businesses at regular intervals according to the risk to health they posed. The authority was required to produce a Service Plan, to demonstrate how the food and feed requirements were delivered and adequately resourced on an annual basis. This included a requirement that the Service Plan was taken through the democratic process.

The Service Plan provided an outline of the food and feed inspection requirements for 2023/2024. This year represented a significant transition to “dual” inspections, where both food hygiene and food standards were combined into a single inspection. The Public Protection Officers have undertaken significant training and assessment to become competent to undertake these dual inspections in accordance with the FSA CoP standards. The desirable outcome of dual inspections was that it reduced the inspection burden on food businesses and increased efficiency for the authority in avoiding two separate visits. A review of resources in the Service Plan found, with the additional funding, that the service should be sufficiently resourced to deliver the food and feed programme this year. However, this was dependent on the Public Protection Officers being able to deliver their inspection allocation. Other service demands and ill-health etc. could impact their ability to complete the programme. These officers were required to work across the whole of Public Protection, therefore any conflicting public health priorities may have an adverse impact.

Carwen Evans, Corporate Manager: Public Protection provided an overview of the Food and Feed Service Plan and the current and future challenges in delivering the statutory service. Food law enforcement was a shared function carried out by officers of the Environmental Health and Trading Standards teams, collectively recognised within the Authority as “Public Protection”. A range of functions were undertaken by the Food and Feed Service such as

food premises registration, enforcement activities and the investigation of suspected and confirmed cases of communicable disease.

The following information was presented:

- The demand on the food and feed service varied from year to year as premises opened and closed.
- As of 31.08.2023, 1210 registered food businesses existed in Ceredigion and 19 premises were approved under Regulation EC No. 853/2004 and as of 01.04.2023, there were 1380 feed businesses subject to regulatory controls in Ceredigion.
- The total number of programmed food hygiene inspections of high-risk premises targeted to be carried out during 2023/24 was 252.
- Approximately 80 revisits to non-broadly compliant premises and 50 requests for re-inspection under the FHRS (non-programmed inspections).
- 10-12 new businesses started trading in Ceredigion each month. New food establishments that came to the attention of the Food Authority for the first time must be subject to an initial inspection from a food hygiene and food standards perspective within 28 days of registering with the Authority. As of August 2023, a backlog of 155 premises awaited food hygiene inspection and 328 premises awaited food standards inspection. A food specialist had been contracted to support this work.
- 188 premises were due feed interventions in 2023/24 and this was funded by the FSA.

Carwen Evans explained that there were adequate resources to deliver the statutory function for 2023/24 provided there were no emergencies or major investigatory work. As for 2024/25, given the significant increase in inspections due, the service may be required to seek additional funding for contractors to support with the work.

Members were provided with the opportunity to ask questions which were answered by Officers present and Councillor Bryan Davies. The main points raised were as follows:

- As farmers were under significant pressure, it was suggested that there should be more collaboration between bodies such as the local authority, DEFRA and FAWL. It was noted that inspection by the local authority (as the enforcement body) was not as extensive for farmers who were members of accredited schemes such as Farm Assured Welsh Livestock (FAWL), as they were already subject to checks.
- There was a full cost recovery for the local authority when they conducted feed inspections as part of the regional hygiene inspection programme.
- If the local authority had a lack of officers to undertake the work, neighbouring local authorities were able to provide support, especially with animal feed, however, this had not yet been required.
- All businesses that prepared and sold food were required to register with the local authority before doing so, however, this was not always the case.

Following questions by the Committee Members, it was agreed to receive the report and recommend to the Cabinet the approval of the Food and Feed Service Plan 2023-24.

#### **4 Ban on the sale and supply of certain single-use plastic products in Wales becomes law**

Councillor Bryan Davies presented the report on behalf of Councillor Matthew Vaux. The Environmental Protection (Single-use Plastic Products) (Wales) Act 2023 (“the Act”) introduced Stage 1 of the ban on businesses and organisations in Wales to sell or supply certain single-use plastic products to consumers and came into effect on 30.10.2023.

The Act made it a criminal offence for businesses and organisations to supply the following products:

- Single-use plastic plates
- Single-use plastic cutlery – like knives, forks and spoons
- Single-use plastic drink stirrers
- Cups made of some types of polystyrene
- Takeaway food containers made of some types of polystyrene
- Plastic sticks for balloons
- Single-use plastic-stemmed cotton buds
- Single-use plastic drinking straws – apart from people who need them to eat and drink safely and independently.

The ban affected retailers, food vendors, takeaways and the hospitality industry and applied to supplies both over the counter and online. There were however several exemptions, for example, that permitted pharmacies to continue to provide plastic straws in cases where individuals needed them to eat and drink safely and independently. Other exemptions would see plastic-stemmed cotton buds still being used in healthcare settings and plastic spoons permitted with the supply of liquid medicines to measure dosage.

Stage 2 bans would come into force by April 2026. This would affect the supply of single-use plastic carrier bags, polystyrene lids for drinks and food containers and products made from a type of plastic called oxo-degradable plastic.

It was envisaged that, as was the case with the introduction of the single-use carrier bag charge some years ago, the new law would embed itself smoothly, with full compliance being achieved.

Members were provided with the opportunity to ask questions which were answered by Officers present and Councillor Bryan Davies. The main points raised were as follows:

- Members were supportive of the new legislation given the environmental challenges and suggested that educating people to dispose of rubbish correctly was key. It was acknowledged that the legislation would possibly have unintended consequences as was often the case.
- Businesses were aware of the new legislation prior to it coming into effect and from discussions with 200-250 businesses to date, no issues had

been identified. From an enforcement perspective, there was an emphasis firstly on educating businesses as opposed to legal action.

- It was acknowledged that there was an element of cost for businesses with the introduction of the ban, however, many businesses had adopted the approach prior to it coming into law. In the event businesses had excess single-use plastics, it was their responsibility to contact suppliers for a refund or to dispose of them correctly.
- Concerns were raised that if the same approach in terms of the ban on single-use plastic were applied to agriculture, it would cause difficulties for farmers. It was noted that farmers were required to recycle plastic and provide evidence of this, however, businesses such as food vendors were unable to trace where plastic was disposed of once given to a customer.
- It was highlighted that at a Full Council meeting on 22.02.2018, the Council unanimously supported a motion to reduce the use of plastic and to support plastic reduction initiatives in Ceredigion and to support this, a Members' Task and Finish Group was created.

Following questions by the Committee Members, it was agreed to note the contents of the report.

## **5 A proposal to implement a ban on giving live animals as prizes on Ceredigion County Council property**

Councillor Bryan Davies presented the report on behalf of Councillor Matthew Vaux. He explained that within Ceredigion County Council, the protection and endorsement of high standards of animal welfare was upmost as part of supporting the farming industry, and to support those who enjoyed keeping animals as pets. The authority therefore supported the RSPCA campaign on "giving pets as prizes" by proposing to implement a ban on giving live animals on County Council property. Since the start of the RSPCA campaign, 13 Welsh local authorities have shown their support.

To Ceredigion County Council's knowledge, no event held on Council land currently offered Pets as Prizes. There were autumn fairs held in Cardigan, Aberaeron and Aberystwyth, however, it was understood that goldfish were not given as prizes by the operator.

Members were provided with the opportunity to ask questions which were answered by Officers present and Councillor Bryan Davies. The main points raised were as follows:

- Clarification was given that the purpose of the proposal was to implement a ban on giving live animals as prizes such as in raffles or fairs where a person had not prepared adequately for the animal, as opposed to bidding for a live animal at an auction.
- It was highlighted that Covid-19 had impacted animal welfare as a record number of people had brought puppies, but later, were unable to care for them. The proposal's focus was to improve and protect animal welfare.

Following questions by the Committee Members, it was agreed to recommend an outright ban on the giving of live animals as prizes, in any form, on Council land to Council.

**6 To present to the Committee the outcome of the Ceredigion Respite & Day Services Initiative through transforming day services (older people, learning disability, Profound and Multiple Learning Disabilities and Autism) and Respite provision (Through Age)**

Councillor Alun Williams (Cabinet Member for Through Age and Wellbeing) explained that the purpose of the report was to scrutinise the outcome of the public engagement and the Action Plan developed and make recommendations if required to the Cabinet. On 06.12.2022, Cabinet approved that the local authority progress with a wider engagement and consultation in 2023 focusing on the re-design of Respite and Day Opportunities. The engagement and consultation embedded the key principles of the Through Age Wellbeing (TAW) Strategy alongside National and Regional Strategies relating to Learning Disabilities, Children Looked After and Respite opportunities on a Through Age basis.

The review focused on the following key areas:-

- Day Service opportunities for Older Adults including those living with a diagnosis of dementia
- Day Service opportunities for Individuals living with a learning disability, autism, and profound and multiple learning disabilities (PMLD)
- Transition pathways on a through-age basis for those living with a learning disability/ autism
- Respite provision (day and residential) on a through-age basis

An extensive public engagement and consultation took place between March – August 2023, undertaken by an independent Company (Practice Solutions Limited) which was funded through Regional Integrated Funding (RIF). A wide range of stakeholders were engaged in the work, including people who accessed respite and day opportunities, families and carers, service delivery organisations, council employees working in social care and day opportunity centres, health employees and people with learning disabilities, dementia, children and young people and those with complex needs. A survey was distributed widely to those using services, their families and other unpaid carers council staff and staff in the council's partner organisations.

A consultation survey was initiated through the council website and was open to the general public throughout the engagement period with 205 responses. Alongside that, Practice Solutions engaged with 206 people in person, both face-to-face and online. In total, 411 people total took part in the review. Having completed the engagement and desktop exercises the data were analysed and key findings were identified. From these key findings, several recommendations have been developed, for the council to consider. An overview of the key findings, recommendations and next steps as noted in the report was provided.

Members were provided with the opportunity to ask questions which were answered by Officers present and Councillor Alun Williams. The main points raised were as follows:

- It was noted that it would not be possible to continue to deliver services as they had over the last 20 years given the rise in demand and complexity. There was a whole system review of how services were

delivered, and all opportunities and assets were being looked at to maximise the benefit for local communities and a robust plan would be put in place. Many other local authorities had completed or were on a similar journey, and therefore they would be able to learn from others.

- Staff working in the Centres were considered vital and would be pivotal in moving the programme of work forward. Staff would continue in similar roles whilst others would receive further training that would enable them to provide a wider range of services.
- It was acknowledged that change could be difficult for service users, carers and staff and therefore, ongoing engagement and consultation was key.
- Members appreciated the level of detail in the report and the service's importance to local communities. A Members' Workshop at one of the service centres was suggested where they would possibly be able to meet service users/ staff. Members felt this would enable them to have a greater understanding of respite and day services.
- It was acknowledged that public engagement in consultations was difficult, however, from the 411 of responses, there were high-quality and thorough responses.
- Members felt it was a shame that Awel Deg in Llandysul was not currently utilised.

Following questions by Committee Members, it was agreed to note the report and recommend that Cabinet:

1. Arrange that Members of the Healthier Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee attend a workshop early in 2024 to include the following:
  - Presentation to Members to include Centre locations and services currently offered, and
  - Workshop to be held at one of the Authority's Centers.
2. Committee Members recommend that Cabinet agree to progress with the re-design of respite and day opportunities in line with the Through Age Wellbeing Strategy and National drivers for change.

Councillor Alun Williams and the Chair extended their thanks to the Officers involved with the work.

## **7 Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) 6 months update report on action against progress**

Consideration was given to the CIW Updated Action Plan which was requested by Committee Members 6 months post-inspection.

Audrey Somerton-Edwards, Interim Corporate Lead Officer: Porth Cynnal and Statutory Director of Social Services explained that she was content with the progress and although some areas were slower than others, this was due to the recruitment challenges. Following the appointment of a Quality Assurance Officer, progress had been made in these areas too and all actions would be completed by 31.03.2024. CIW were content with the progress too and appreciated the dialogue with the local authority.

The Chair explained that Officers had advised that the format and layout of the Action Plan would be more user-friendly when it was presented again in a further 6 months.

Councillor Alun Williams stated that he was pleased with the inspection, but as always, there were areas for improvement which had been identified by Officers. Following the inspection, an Action plan had been developed focusing on the improvements required.

Following consideration, Committee Members agreed to note the contents of the report.

## **8 Statutory Director of Social Services Annual Report 2022/2023**

Councillor Alun Williams presented the Statutory Director of Social Services Annual Report for 2022/2023. The Annual Report of the Statutory Director of Social Services content was defined in Part 8 of the Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014 under the “Code of Practice on the Role of Directors of Social Services”. The Annual Report aimed to produce a rounded picture of the Social Services Department in Ceredigion which provided more timely feedback into planning and budgetary processes.

It was noted that there had been a period of change in terms of the Statutory Director of Social Services, and Audrey Somerton-Edwards, Interim Corporate Lead Officer: Porth Cynnal and Statutory Director of Social Services had been key during this time and to the production of the report.

Audrey Somerton-Edwards explained that following a change in legislation around the production of the Annual Report of the Statutory Director of Social Services, it would be a more compact document in moving forward.

Following consideration, Committee Members agreed to note the contents of the report.

## **9 Independent Reviewing Service Performance Management Report quarter 1 2023.2024**

Councillor Alun Williams presented the Independent Reviewing Service Report Quarter 1 2023/2024. Quarterly reports were taken to the Healthier Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee as part of an ongoing examination of the topic to ensure that the local authority fulfils its duties as the Corporate Parent. The report included national and local standards and targets used to measure outcomes for looked-after children (LAC) and care leavers at the time of their review meeting and included Welsh Government (WG) Performance Indicators.

Based on the information available and the views expressed during the review meeting, the IRO made a professional judgement about the effectiveness of a child/young person’s care plan in meeting their needs and may recommend changes to the care plan. During the review meeting, the IRO considered whether the child/young person required assistance to identify relevant other people to obtain legal advice/take proceedings on their behalf. This action was deemed necessary for 2 young people by the IRO in



the period. In addition, the IRO has regard as to whether the child/young person's human rights were being breached in any way and, if so, may make a referral to CAF/CASS Cymru. This action was not required at any of the review meetings in the period. The reports are considered within Multi Agency LAC Quality Assurance Meetings which met quarterly; these meetings provided an opportunity to identify and act upon performance and other issues with this area of work. The reports were also circulated and reviewed by the LA's Corporate Parenting Group, which took place quarterly. Councillor Alun Williams proceeded to present a Summary of the Key Points noted on page 2 of the report.

Following consideration, Committee Members agreed to note the contents of the report and the levels of activity with the Local Authority.

**10 Joint Scrutiny Working Group minutes of the 12.9.23 meeting for the Mid Wales Joint Committee for Health and Care**

Consideration was given to the Joint Scrutiny Working Group minutes from the meeting of the Mid Wales Joint Committee for Health and Care held on 12.09.2023. It was noted that the Mid Wales Joint Committee will meet bi-annually in the future.

Following consideration, Committee Members agreed to note the minutes and the new arrangements.

**11 Consider the Forward Work Plan 2023.2024**

It was agreed to note the contents of the Forward Work Programme presented subject to the following:

- A workshop on the Ceredigion Respite & Day Services Initiative
- Members agreed to extend an invite to Barcud and Wales and West Housing (March 2024)
- Item on the provision of mental health support services in the county

**12 Consider the Committee's minutes of the meeting dated 18.9.2023 and any matters arising therefrom**

It was agreed to confirm the minutes of the meeting held on 18.09.2023.

Matters arising: None.

**Confirmed at the Meeting of the Healthier Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 8 February 2024**

**Chairman:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_