

**Minutes of the Meeting of the Thriving Communities Overview and Scrutiny  
Committee held at the Council Chamber, Neuadd Cyngor Ceredigion,  
Penmorfa, Aberaeron and remotely on Monday, 20 January 2025**

**Present:** Councillor Marc Davies (Chair), Councillors Gwyn Wigley Evans (Vice-Chair), Shelley Childs, Gethin Davies, Meirion Davies, Rhodri Davies, Wyn Evans, Chris James, Maldwyn Lewis, Sian Maehrlein, Ann Bowen Morgan & Carl Worrall.

**Also in attendance:** Councillors Ifan Davies, Amanda Edwards, Elizabeth Evans, Eryl Evans, Keith Evans, Raymond Evans, Rhodri Evans, Hugh Hughes & Gareth Lloyd.

**Cabinet Members present:** Councillors Catrin MS Davies, Clive Davies, Gareth Davies, Keith Henson & Alun Williams.

**Officers in attendance:** Barry Rees, Corporate Director; Russell Hughes-Pickering, Corporate Lead Officer, Economy & Regeneration; Sarah Groves-Phillips, Corporate Manager, Planning Services; Rhodri Llwyd, Corporate Lead Officer, Highways & Environmental Services; Phil Jones, Corporate Manager, Highways Services; Katy Spain, Service Manager, Transport Services; Steve Hallows, Service Manager, Highways Development; Duncan Hall, Corporate Lead Officer, Finance & Procurement; Debbie Evans, Corporate Manager, Service Accountancy; Elin Prysor, Corporate Lead Officer, Legal & Governance; Lowri Edwards, Corporate Lead Officer, Democratic Services; Lisa Evans, Standards and Scrutiny Officer & Neris Morgans, Democratic Services Officer.

(10.00am- 1.03pm)

**1 Apologies**

- i. Councillor John Roberts apologised for his inability to attend the meeting.
- ii. Councillor Wyn Evans apologised that he would leave the meeting early.

**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.**

There were no disclosures of Personal and Prejudicial Interests (including whipping declarations) from Committee Members.

**3 Chair Announcements**

None.

**4 Planning Enforcement Support**

Councillor Clive Davies (Cabinet Member for Economy & Regeneration) presented the report on the enforcement service resource support requirements. He explained that the Local Planning Authority's Enforcement Service had been struggling for some time and in the past, attempts to recruit

have been unsuccessful, and combined roles were utilised across Development Management (DM) and Enforcement team to fill this void. Unfortunately, due to the high caseloads in DM and specialist, highly litigious nature of enforcement, the situation has worsened. Audit Wales (AW) brought this to the local authority's attention in 2021 and again in 2023. Securing additional third-party support through consultants has proved fruitless, with costs high and cases closed low.

As of 12/4/24 (start of Task and Finish work), the caseload stood at 432 cases down from a peak of over 600 in the past two years. Furthermore, there were approximately 250 'clic' enquiries in need of responses. In the 2023/2024 financial year, the enforcement service opened 116 cases and during the same period closed 220 cases. The need to support the enforcement service has been discussed at the wider Planning Service Task and Finish group implemented post AW review. Members and Officers in that group were of the view that in order to ensure an effective enforcement service was delivered, additional resources were required.

It was highlighted that housebuilding directly supports 434 jobs locally and contributed in excess of £280,000 in additional council tax per annum and an additional £1.7 million in household spending in retail and leisure in the local economy.

Dr Sarah Groves-Phillips, Corporate Manager provided an overview of the 4 options as outlined in the report:

- Platinum - A No Breach Allowed Approach
- Gold - A Proactive Enforcement Service
- Silver - A purposeful Enforcement Service
- Bronze - The In-budget Enforcement Service (*current budget and capacity*)

She advised that it was important to be mindful that in all the options outlined above, recruitment for enforcement roles was difficult and there was a recognised national shortage. The risks associated with not resourcing the service effectively were outlined.

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

- It was noted that there was a statutory duty to provide enforcement service, but there was no legislation in place that dictated the level of service required. Although the service was delegated to Officers, it was suggested that the cases be shared with Members to enable their input. Many Members felt strongly that it was time to invest in the service due to the possible impact on the Council's reputation and services. Historically, the enforcement service was rated in the lowest 10 performing local authorities across Wales.
- Officers clarified that the report's figures were based on gross figures, such as the cost of the service, and any underlying costs, such as HR. Income assumptions had not been included.

- Most planning fees were set by Welsh Government (WG), who were currently considering whether to increase the cost of retrospective planning applications.
- As there was a national shortage of planners and enforcement planners, recruitment could be challenging, but a neighbouring local authority had successfully recruited recently. An advertising campaign to promote the roles available would be key. Officers clarified that any budget allocated towards recruitment would be ring-fenced and would not be reallocated if recruitment proved difficult.
- If the platinum or gold option was selected, there was no scope to share a solicitor with other local authorities in the short term given the level of legal work involved.
- The platinum option included 2 full-time Specialist Enforcement Officers (Heritage and Direct Action); Officers acknowledged that both roles would benefit the service given the number of listed buildings across the local authority and the need for direct action work. At present, there was no capacity to focus on the Proceeds of Crime cases.
- Dependent on the Cabinet's decision on 21.01.25, the Committee would be requested to consider the gold and platinum investment options in the Planning Enforcement Service further during the 25/26 budget setting process on 07.02.25 and the implications of this on the Council Tax.

Following a lengthy discussion, it was AGREED to recommend to Cabinet additional funding for the enforcement service for a 'Platinum' service i.e. 'A No Breach Allowed Approach' in order to secure additional resources, recruit additional staff and ensure an effective enforcement service is operational for the next financial year.

## **5 Proposed Ceredigion County Council Off-Street Parking Places Order 2025**

Councillor Keith Henson (Cabinet Member for Highways & Environmental Services and Carbon Management) presented the report on the responses to the consultation process on the proposals put forward to meet the Council's approved budget additional income requirement from the Council's Off Street Pay and Display Car Parks.

He explained that the proposals related to Parking Places managed under the auspices of the Ceredigion County Council Off Street Parking Places Orders were presented to the Committee on 11/07/2024 and Cabinet on 03/09/2024. Following the Cabinet's decision to amend the proposals to include exempting Blue Badge Holders from payment of Pay and Display parking charges, which included amending the proposed charge structure to add an additional 50p to each tariff, the revised proposals were subject to the consultation process prescribed for Traffic Regulation Orders. This included a Formal Consultation stage between 19/09/2024 and 11/10/2024 where the Statutory Consultees were invited to comment on the proposals. Following consideration of those responses in relation to the proposals presented, this was then followed by a Public Notice period inviting objections to proposals between 12/11/2024 and 04/12/2024.

Rhodri Llwyd, Corporate Lead Officer provided a presentation to the Committee outlining the following:

- Background
- Summary of Proposals
- Scrutiny recommendations
- Consultation
- Considerations
- Potential Considerations for the Committee

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

- Members supported the proposed charging structure for the Council's Off Street Pay and Display Car Parks across the two different zones (Ceredigion Inland & Ceredigion Coastal) as there was a significant difference between the areas.
- Historically, Pendre Carpark was for permit holders only, but during Covid-19, no permits were issued. This had not yet been reverted to the historic arrangement and was pending the decision of the Cabinet on 21.01.25. Gloster's Row car park was historically a pay and display car park.
- Members suggested exploring options and having a discussion with Theatr Mwldan, Cardigan about the possibility of having a subsidised parking scheme in place for those using the facility, similar to the arrangement at Sainsbury's, Lampeter. At present, the public could purchase season tickets for Bath House car park, and this offer would continue.

It was AGREED to note the content of the public consultation, consider the proposals for the charging structure and Pendre and Gloster Row/Red Lion car parks based on the consultation responses, and to support the package of proposals put forward.

## **6 On-street Charged for Parking Proposals - Aberystwyth Promenade**

Councillor Keith Henson (Cabinet Member for Highways & Environmental Services and Carbon Management) explained that the purpose of the report was to report the responses to the consultation process to proposals to introduce on-street charged for parking proposals along sections of Aberystwyth promenade as requested by the Committee.

Proposals related to proposals put forward pursuant to the introduction of charged for parking along the Promenade in Aberystwyth were presented to the Committee on 11/07/2024 and Cabinet on 03/09/2024. Following the Cabinet's decision, a Formal Consultation stage had been carried out between 03/10/2024 and 25/10/2024 where the Statutory Consultees were invited to comment on the proposals. Following consideration of those responses in relation to the proposals presented, this was then followed by a Public Notice period inviting objections to proposals between 04/12/2024 and 27/12/2024.

Rhodri Llwyd, Corporate Lead Officer provided a presentation to the Committee outlining the following:

- Background
- Enabling Legislation
- Proposal
- The Case for Change- Scheme Benefits
- Arrangements for Blue Badge Holders
- Charging Structure
- Charging Times and Locations
- Consultation
- Considerations
- Recommendations for the Committee

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

- Concerns were raised that the public notice period was open during the festive period; Officers advised that the consultation was open for over 3 weeks. Aberystwyth University was not a statutory consultee in the formal consultation stage; however, the public notice period was open to all and publicised widely.
- Members suggested exploring options for off-street parking permits in the future to support commuters impacted by the proposal. Concerns were raised that many would try to find free parking in town, which would impact on the flow of traffic in the town centre. It was noted that the season ticket had been reduced from the current price to the equivalent of just under £25 per month over 12 months and enabled holders to park in the local authority's off-street car parks across the county.
- Parking for the disabled was free of charge in line with legislation.
- It was noted that a hotel owner had raised concerns with the 8am-8pm charging in place; Officers advised that this was proposed to facilitate the nighttime economy and to generate a turnover.

It was AGREED to note the content of the public consultation and to support the package of proposals put forward.

## **7 Oversight of in year financial matters**

Duncan Hall, Corporate Lead Officer provided an overview of the 24/25 Controllable Revenue Budget - Financial Performance - Quarter 2 presented to the Cabinet on 03.12.24. At the time of writing the report, a projected overspend was forecasted for the year of £313k on the Controllable Budget. However, this excluded certain risks in relation to the delivery of in year savings.

An overview of the following as outlined in the report was provided:

- Budget Performance - Key challenges
- Budget Performance - Key Benefits
- Budget Performance - Budget Savings

In relation to the BRAG Status on the 24/25 Budget Reductions, two items (item 36b- Lampeter Library & item 70- Out of County Placements) were categorised as red at the time of writing the report. Since then, item 43 (charges for non-residential Care) has been changed to red as WG had decided against increasing the weekly cap from £100 to £120. A grant worth £62,500 had been received from WG to support the local authority for this financial year due to this decision. An overview of the Budget Performance - Council Tax and Budget Performance – Service Positions as presented in the report was provided. As shared at a recent Members’ Workshop, the local authority had received an additional £3m from WG for various items including pay pressures and additional funding for Schools.

From a Capital Programme perspective, Ysgol Dyffryn Aeron opened its doors at the beginning of January. The Aberaeron Coastal Protection scheme end date has been extended.

Members were provided with the opportunity to ask questions which were answered by Duncan Hall. The main points raised were as follows:

- It was noted that the investment in the Waste Collection Service was an in-year cost and had been funded from reserves. Longer-term investment to the service would be considered during the 25/26 budget-setting process.
- Capital funding for a Highways Local Government Borrowing Initiative was announced in WG’s Draft Budget 2025-26. Although there were no further details, the local authority was estimated to receive £2.3m.

It was AGREED to note the report and for the Committee to scrutinise the information provided as it deems appropriate and relevant to the areas under its remit.

## **8 Report on the visit to the Aberaeron Coastal Defence Scheme**

Consideration was given to the feedback following the Committee’s visit to Aberaeron’s Coastal Defence Scheme on 29 November 2024.

Committee Members thanked Officers and Contractors for an informative visit to the site.

Councillor Elizabeth Evans, Local Member for Aberaeron and Aberarth thanked the Committee for their visit and that she would discuss any proposed changes to the scheme with the relevant Officers.

Rhodri Llwyd, Corporate Lead Officer noted that a press release outlining the revised completion dates had recently been published, and there was continued discussion between Officers and Contractors regarding the scheme and the contract itself.

It was AGREED to note the report.

**9 To confirm the Minutes of the previous Meeting and to consider any matters arising from those Minutes**

It was AGREED to confirm the minutes of the meeting held on 23 October 2024.

Matters arising: None.

**10 To consider the Overview and Scrutiny Forward Work Programme**

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

- Update on the Proposed Ceredigion County Council Off-Street Parking Places Order 2025 following implementation
- Update on On-street Charged for Parking Proposals - Aberystwyth Promenade following implementation

**Confirmed at the Meeting of the Thriving Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 7 February 2025**

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

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