

**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 Monday, 15 July 2024**

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

Also in attendance: Councillors Rhodri Evans & Gareth Lloyd.

Cabinet Members present: Councillors Catrin M S. Davies, Matthew Vaux & Alun Williams.

Officers in attendance: Audrey Somerton-Edwards, Corporate Lead Officer: Porth Cynnal; Greg Jones, Corporate Lead Officer: Porth Cymorth Cynnar; Iwan Davies, Corporate Manager: Early Intervention; Nerys Lewis, Corporate Manager: Direct Services; Heddwyn Evans, Environmental Health Manager; Elis Gwyn, Senior Environmental Health Officer; Dwynwen Jones, Overview and Scrutiny Office & Neris Morgans, Democratic Services Officer.

(10.33am- 12.30pm)

1 Apologies

- i. Councillor Bryan Davies, Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Democratic Services, Policy, Performance and People and Organisation apologised for his inability to attend the meeting.
- ii. Councillors Keith Evans and Carl Worrall apologised for having to 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.

Councillor Alun Williams declared a personal interest in the discussions surrounding GP Services in item 7.

3 A report on the findings of Ceredigion County Council's 2023 Air Quality Progress Report, In fulfilment of Part IV of the Environment Act 1995 Local Air Quality Management.

Councillor Matthew Vaux (Cabinet Member for Partnerships, Housing, Legal and Governance and Public Protection) presented the report on the findings of Ceredigion County Council's 2023 Air Quality Progress Report. Within Ceredigion, the air quality standards had been found to be well within the national standards therefore there were no Local Air Quality Management Area (AQMA). However, across Wales, Nitrogen Dioxide (NO₂) and Particulate Matter (PM₁₀) were the main two pollutants of concern, with other

Welsh Authorities having declared more than 40 AQMAs to date, one for PM₁₀, the rest associated with NO₂ from road traffic.

The local authority must report on both local NO₂ and PM₁₀ levels annually. An overview of the monitoring of NO₂ and PM₁₀ in Ceredigion was provided. The Air Quality Progress Report related to data gathered in the previous year, therefore the 2023 report related to air monitoring data collected in 2022. The NO₂ and PM₁₀ concentrations noted at all locations of Ceredigion in 2022 were well below the statutory limit (annual mean of 40µg/m³) during all months when data was collected. Ceredigion continued to experience some of the best air quality standards in Wales with all monitoring locations being highly compliant with legal standards.

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

- Members praised the report and encouraged all to share the county's success.
- Sites were reviewed to ensure the most appropriate areas were monitored and Officers were open to new suggestions. No monitoring had taken place in Penparcau, Aberystwyth in the past and given the traffic levels in the area, the Committee agreed to request that this be considered.
- Higher levels of NO₂ in January compared to the summer months when there was traditionally a higher traffic volume was a trend nationally. This was possibly due to an increased use of central heating and different climatic conditions. Air Quality Standards should improve with an increase in the uptake of electric vehicles.
- The local authority and National Resources Wales (NRW) worked closely together. Local authorities regulated processes that emitted into the air and smaller-sized processes whilst NRW tended to regulate larger processes such as anaerobic digesters and larger-sized biomasses.

It was AGREED to note the contents of the report and to recommend placing Diffusion Tubes in Penparcau, Aberystwyth.

4 Age-friendly Communities assessment

Councillor Alun Williams (Cabinet Member for Through Age and Wellbeing) presented the Ceredigion Self-Assessment for registration with the World Health Organisation (WHO) Age-Friendly Network. In 2014, every local authority in Wales signed the Dublin Declaration committing to working in partnership for the development of Age-Friendly Communities. It was estimated that the population of Ceredigion had declined over the last 10 years, from 75,220 in 2010 to 72,895 in 2020. Trends showed that the working-age population (16-64) had decreased by 14% since 2001, while the 65+ population had increased significantly by 29.5%. It was predicted that these trends would continue.

For the past 18 months, the Carers and Community Support Team have undertaken engagement work with various relevant forums and collected

information in relation to resident's experiences of ageing in Ceredigion, with a view to apply to become a member of the WHO's Global Network of Age-Friendly Cities and Communities.

A brief overview of the steps local authorities were required to undertake to achieve membership was provided. The first stage of the process was to provide a self-assessment via online pro-forma against the 8 domains of Age-Friendly Communities and a letter of endorsement from the Chief Executive and the nominated Cabinet Member. The self-assessment would be verified by the Older People's Commissioner Office on behalf of the WHO and if accepted, the Local Authority would be required to develop an Action Plan to make Ceredigion a better place to age. Continual engagement with older persons would be at the heart of developing and reviewing the plan.

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

- The scheme was a commitment as opposed to an accreditation. It would enable the local authority to be a part of the age-friendly network, where organisations nationally and globally would be able to share information and practices for the benefit of the ageing population and to help navigate challenges in society.
- It was acknowledged that family and communities provided valuable support to the older generation, and it was vital where possible, that they remained close to their local areas.
- Members thanked all who had contributed to the scheme to date and wished the team well in developing the action plan.

It was AGREED to endorse the submission of the self-assessment and a covering letter to the World Health Organisation. If successful, this will result in Ceredigion being admitted to the WHO network of Age-Friendly communities.

5 Special Guardianship Orders Policy

Councillor Alun Williams (Cabinet Member for Through Age and Wellbeing) explained that reducing Children Looked After (CLA) numbers safe and appropriately was a national priority for the Welsh Government. It was a key corporate priority for the local authority, as, when safe, enabled a positive outcome for children and young people to live in a permanent home, where possible within their own birth family, or where this was not possible, in a permanent family home. There were many reasons why some children were unable to live with their birth parent(s) and at times, arrangements needed to be made for children to be cared for by others. Some children may live with other members of their family, foster carers, adoptive parents or in residential care placements.

A SGO was a Court Order which appointed a specific person(s) to become a child's Guardian until they reached 18. An SGO offered greater security than long-term fostering but did not entail the absolute legal severance from the birth family that stemmed from an adoption order. It was therefore a good

and stable outcome for an increasing number of children and young people. SGOs were introduced by the Adoption and Children Act 2002. The Special Guardianship (Wales) Regulations 2005, were subsequently introduced and amended by The Special Guardianship (Wales) (Amendment) Regulations 2018 and Special Guardianship Code of Practice on the exercise of social services functions in relation to Special Guardianship orders 2018. At present, there were 39 SGOs registered through Ceredigion, accounting for in the region of £280k pa, and over 50% of these would be 18 in the next 5 years.

The local authority has reviewed the Special Guardianship Policy, which set out the eligibility to become a Special Guardian, the application process and the Local Authority's responsibilities in terms of reporting to the Court, Support available to Special Guardians etc. The reviewed and updated Policy has been aligned with the "Guide for the Offer of Special Guardianship Support in Wales 2020 (AFA)" which drew together all relevant statutory guidance. The review identified that greater clarification was required in relation to the Financial Support available to Special Guardians and, to do this, a standalone "Special Guardianship Orders Financial Policy" was required. The policy aimed to reduce the potential delay in achieving permanence for children and young people, when Prospective Guardians were uncertain of the Financial Support available to them.

Following a comprehensive review of the Policy, a consultation with existing SGOs in relation to the Special Guardianship Order Policy and Financial Policy was undertaken over 2 weeks (22 May 2024 – 5 June 2024). The consultation was shared with existing SGOs, CAFCASS, Ceredigion County Council Staff, Foster Panel members and other key stakeholders and on the Ceredigion County Council website. The policies have been updated to reflect the input from the 7 responses received. It was acknowledged that the local authority needed to improve contacts with the guardians and the development of the policies was the first step in improving the service.

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

- It was noted that the safeguarding and wellbeing of a child was paramount, as was to ensure a child had a steady home to reside in.
- The possibility of adoption was ruled out before a SGO application process was considered. SGO was the preferred option as opposed to adoption, as birth parents could continue to have input where appropriate.
- Members commended the staff for their work. Officers thanked the SGOs for their support and commitment to the children and young people during a challenging time in their lives.

It was AGREED to recommend that the Cabinet approve the Special Guardianship Order Financial Policy and delegate authority to the Statutory Director of Social Care to implement the new policy and review annually.

6 Supported Lodgings Policy

Councillor Alun Williams (Cabinet Member for Through Age and Wellbeing) presented the Supported Lodgings Policy. The local authority currently had minimal opportunities to provide suitable accommodation to accommodate 16+. Supported Lodgings (SL) was intended to provide a 'stepping stone' to independent living for the young people of Ceredigion, aged between 16-25 years of age. This included young people leaving care who may not be fully ready to take on their own tenancies, who were homeless or who were unaccompanied asylum seekers. The provision did not come under the Regulation of Social Care Wales Act (RISCA) and there was no requirement for the provision to be registered with Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW).

SL described a situation where a young person lived with a family, an individual or a couple who had a spare room and were willing to provide informal guidance and practical assistance to the young person who would live semi-independently. The Host would support the young person's progress and guide them towards full independence. The report outlined a scheme proposal for Ceredigion, that would bridge and provide meaningful support and accommodation for our young people whilst they transitioned into adulthood.

Within the local authority, there were 29 young people aged 16-17 who were due to leave care within the next 2 years and 16 more who were turning 16 in the next 12 months, making the total projected demand approximately 45. The Policy was underpinned by the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 and outlined the assessment process along with the role of the panel in reviewing applications alongside the ongoing support that would be developed for the hosts. An overview of the proposal was provided.

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

- There was a financial test attached to the scheme in the event a young person was in or found employment whilst in SL and support to explore benefits and financial support would be provided.
- The scheme operated in some other local authorities for several years, and it was a way to help retain young people in the local area.
- SL was set out in legislation, and hosts would be assessed, approved, and reviewed as required.
- The plan initially was to have 3 or 4 SLs in the county, and following feedback, this would hopefully increase in line with the service's capacity.

It was AGREED to recommend that Cabinet:

- approve the Supported Lodgings Policy and scheme.
- give delegate authority to the Statutory Director of Social Care to implement policy and review annually.

7 To Consider the Forward Work Plan 2024/2025

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

- Financial update related to the Committee's remit prior to 25/26 budget setting process.
- Update by the NHS on Ceredigion's dentistry services / GP surgeries.
- Update related to mental health provision in the county (including by agricultural charities– Tir Dewi, The DPJ Foundation & RABI).

8 Confirm minutes of the 11th March 2024 and 21st March 2024 and to consider any matters arising therefrom

It was AGREED to confirm the minutes of the meeting held on 11 March 2024 and 21 March 2024.

Matters arising: None.

Confirmed at the Meeting of the Healthier Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 2 September 2024

Chairman: _____

Date: _____