

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, 5 March 2025

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

Also in attendance: Councillors Gethin Davies, Elizabeth Evans, Raymond Evans, Hugh Hughes & Gareth Lloyd.

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

Officers in attendance: Donna Pritchard, Corporate Lead Officer, Porth Gofal; Nerys Lewis, Corporate Manager, Direct Services; Greg Jones, Corporate Lead Officer, Porth Cymorth Cynnar; Carwyn Young, Corporate Manager, Wellbeing Centres; Alwyn Davies, Team Manager - Through Age Physical Activity & Play; Llyr Hughes, Corporate Manager, Housing Services; Cerys Purches-Phillips, Senior Housing Officer; Martin Gillard, Senior Housing Officer; Elizabeth Upcott, Corporate Manager, Safeguarding; Lowri Edwards, Corporate Lead Officer, Democratic Services; Dwynwen Jones, Overview and Scrutiny Support Officer & Neris Morgans, Democratic Services Officer.

(10.00am- 12.55pm)

1 Apologies

Councillors Eryl Evans and Wyn Evans apologised for leaving the meeting early.

2 Disclosure 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. Councillors Catrin M.S. Davies, Amanda Edwards, Elaine Evans, Eryl Evans, Keith Evans, Wyn Evans, Keith Henson, Sian Maehrlein and Ann Bowen Morgan declared a personal interest under item 5.
- ii. Dwynwen Jones, Overview and Scrutiny Support Officer declared a personal and prejudicial interest under items 6 and 7, in accordance with the Code of Conduct for Local Government Employees; and withdrew from the meeting whilst the matters were being discussed.
- iii. Neris Morgans, Democratic Services Officer declared a personal interest under item 5, in accordance with the Code of Conduct for Local Government Employees.

3 Chair Announcements

The Chair thanked Councillor Amanda Edwards for chairing the meetings in her absence. Committee Members welcomed the Chair on her return from maternity leave.

4 Specialised Disability Services

Councillor Alun Williams (Cabinet Member for Through Age and Wellbeing) provided an update on the Specialised Disability Services following Cabinet's approval on 6 December 2022 for a wide-ranging engagement and consultation process that focused on the re-design of Respite and Day Opportunities. The approach encompassed key principles from the Through Age Wellbeing (TAW) Strategy alongside National and Regional Strategies relating to Learning Disabilities, Children Looked After and Respite services.

An extensive public engagement and consultation took place between March – August 2023, undertaken by an independent Company (Practice Solutions Limited); funded through the Regional Integrated Fund (RIF). In December 2023, the Cabinet approved eight proposals outlined in the report. Guided by the recommendations, in July 2024, the Council's Leadership Group was made aware of further analysis that showed how traditional Day Services in Ceredigion lacked reach, depth and specialism (especially for citizens that needed support most), whilst trials of 'open access' day provisions had provided little direct benefit to the client (or value to the Authority).

To overcome this, the report outlined how the TAW division proposed to create a suite of Specialised Disability Services, accessed by clients as part of a care & support plan, where they were not already in receipt of other residential or supported accommodation provision, e.g., shared lives, supporting living. There would be three new core services, in descending order of complexity:

- Complex Eligible Needs & Profound and Multiple Learning Difficulties (PMLD) - scaled education & transition services
- Community Employment & Volunteering - guiding and connecting clients to long-term employment opportunities
- Intermediate Eligible Needs - connecting clients, their families & networks with universal & community-based services; often via a Direct Payment element

For ineligible clients, an awareness programme would run (in parallel with the launch of the new service) to ensure they, alongside their families, carers and networks understood the breadth of universal services available across the wider TAW estate. This would develop the hub and spoke model recommended in the engagement & consultation report.

With the TAW Board's direction, the division has developed service specifications and staff profiles as outlined in the report. In parallel, the corporate body had supported the development of a staff consultation programme on the new services and operational structures, with an aim to launch before the end of March 2025. Unions had been briefed at key stages and would again be a central partner in the consultation exercise.

It was envisaged that the current estate of Day Services buildings would be largely retained given the geographical spread of the three key sites (Canolfan Padarn – Aberystwyth; Canolfan Meugan - Cardigan & Canolfan Steffan – Lampeter). It was likely that the Aberystwyth Adult Day Centre building, beneath the library, would be returned to the corporate estate for review. Subject to further direction from the Scrutiny Committee, it was intended to pursue the consultation exercise with staff in early Q1 2025/6 before returning with final proposals for the launch of the service and a communication programme with Clients, families, carers and the wider community.

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:

- Although there were no catering facilities in the centres, there were opportunities for service users to cater for themselves and this had been incorporated into the Life Skills Programme.
- It was agreed that Officers would contact Councillor Mark Strong to discuss further.
- Concerns were raised with access to transport and the level of services for service users in rural communities compared to those who accessed the 3 hubs. It was noted that the focus was on each service user's needs and to create opportunities for people at home and in their local communities, rather than having to travel to the hubs where appropriate. Historically, many service users who had attended day centres would have been better supported elsewhere.
- Given the cost associated with the specialist facilities in centres such as the sensory room in Canolfan Padarn and Steffan, it would not be realistic to have the provision in each community. Service users who required specialist services as part of their care and support plan would have access to the nearest hub that included the facilities required for them. Support would be provided to access the facilities.
- From a staffing perspective, there were issues nationally with the recruitment of Social Care staff, including qualified staff recruitment, which had been a challenge in Ceredigion.
- Concerns were raised that Tregaron had lost its services, and although there were plans for Cylch Caron, there were questions about whether local residents would receive the same level of service as other areas.

It was AGREED to note the report.

5 Play Sufficient Assessment 2025

Councillor Catrin M.S. Davies (Cabinet Member for Culture, Leisure and Customer Services) presented the Ceredigion Play Sufficiency Assessment (PSA) 2025 including the proposed priorities for the Ceredigion Play Action Plan 2025-28. The Welsh Government (WG) recognised its aim of creating a play-friendly Wales and to provide excellent opportunities for children to play.

Under section 11(1) of the Children's and Families Wales Measure 2010 there was an obligation on each County Council regarding play opportunities.

Since 2013 and every 3 years since, each local authority had to complete a PSA. This was the 5th PSA carried out by Ceredigion County Council. The duty consisted of two elements; firstly, an assessment of local play sufficiency; and secondly, an action plan to secure sufficient play opportunities so far as reasonably practicable. An assessment toolkit was provided by WG to support the process which was split into 4 themes (Population; Places Where Children Play; Supervised Provision and Policy Synergy, Engagement, Advocacy and Information).

Councillor Catrin M.S. Davies provided an overview of the consultation process and findings. To increase awareness of the important contribution play could make to everyday life in Ceredigion, an Ambition for Play supported by Strategic Objectives had been created and would act as a framework for all organisations within the county that contributed to the Play agenda. The ambition, objectives and the proposed action plan for the Ceredigion Play Action Plan 2025-28 were outlined. Once endorsed, the PSA, Summary Report and Play Action Plan would be submitted to WG and there was a requirement for all documents to be published on the Council's website. Annual Progress for the Play Action Plan would be submitted to WG for the duration of the Plan.

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

- It was noted that replacing and installing play equipment was expensive, especially specialised accessible equipment.
- Concerns were raised that it was no longer possible for Town and Community Councils to apply for the Ceredigion Community Grant Scheme following a decision by Cabinet in 2024.
- The Welsh language was important to the service and most staff were bilingual. Work was ongoing with the Welsh Language Service to develop the Welsh language in traditional schoolyard games.
- Concerns were raised that although housing developers at times committed to include play areas as part of their plans, this was often not carried out. It was noted that the Council had agreed to a platinum level of enforcement service at the 25-26 budget-setting process.
- If Town and Community Councils held responsibility for play areas in their ward, they were responsible for ensuring the equipment was inspected regularly.
- The importance of learning how to swim was vital; it was noted that provision was in place for all primary schools in Ceredigion to access swimming lessons. In addition, around 600 children accessed swimming lessons in the local authority's swimming pools.
- It was clarified that free transport was available to several free events arranged by the service such as the Summer of Fun events.
- The single-gender events targeted girls as there was a decline in the number of girls who participated in sports.
- The team had held activities in many towns and villages across Ceredigion, with efforts to link with deprived areas. Members were

encouraged to contact the team if they wished to hold play activities in their communities, or at events held locally.

Councillor Catrin M.S. Davies extended her thanks to all Town and Community Councils that held responsibility for play areas.

It was AGREED to accept the report and recommend to Cabinet:

1. To consider and endorse the Ceredigion Play Sufficiency Assessment 2025.
2. To adopt the Ambition and Objectives for Play in Ceredigion and the proposed Ceredigion Play Action Plan 2025-28, subject to:
 - the review of the Ceredigion Community Grant Scheme, to include, that Town and Community Councils could apply for grants for play equipment only.

6 Housing Support Grant (HSG) Strategy Mid Point Review

Councillor Matthew Vaux (Cabinet Member for Partnerships, Housing, Legal and Governance and Public Protection) explained that the HSG programme plan was endorsed by the Council in September 2022 and provided the 4-year objectives to develop existing services as well as align work to the overall Housing Strategy, complementing the Authorities own Strategic Objectives. Overall, the programme plan was focused on key areas to develop.

Councillor Matthew Vaux and Martin Gillard, Senior Housing Officer provided an overview of the Current Situation & Progress Update as outlined in the report.

It was AGREED to note the report.

7 Local Housing Strategy Action Plan

Councillor Matthew Vaux (Cabinet Member for Partnerships, Housing, Legal and Governance and Public Protection) presented an update on the delivery of the Action Plan for the Local Housing Strategy – Housing for All (2023 – 2028). The purpose of the Local Housing Strategy was to set out a clear vision for housing within the county, along with the key priorities which identified and responded to the challenges ahead for the 5 years. To deliver the Local Housing Strategy, the actions and measures identified would be monitored through the Strategic Housing Partnership and, as and when appropriate, Overview and Scrutiny. Monitoring would be formed through an Action Plan.

The Plan highlighted the objectives identified within the Local Housing Strategy, together with the actions and details as to how the Council envisaged them to be achieved. Each action point had a clear measure/s and would support reaching the desired outcomes. It was acknowledged that the Housing Strategy and actions set out within were not achievable solely by the Housing Team and as such, clear partnership working was highlighted within the Plan. It was anticipated that the Action Plan would be reviewed, amended and updated annually throughout the life of the Strategy. It was for

that reason that it was shared with the Committee, highlighting the progress in the first year (1 October 2023 to 30 September 2024).

An overview of the Current Situation as outlined in the report was provided including the progress identified for year 1. The Action Plan remained a partnership plan and regular monitoring together with presenting updates at the Strategic Housing Partnership also supported the progress. The Action Plan would also be reviewed and updated annually to ensure that it was up to date and reflective of the current climate.

Committee Members extended their thanks to the Housing Service for their work in challenging circumstances.

It was AGREED to note the report.

8 Independent Reviewing Officer report, quarter 2 - 1.7.24-30.9.24

Councillor Alun Williams (Cabinet Member for Through Age and Wellbeing) explained that the quarterly reports were presented to the Committee as part of an ongoing examination of the topic to ensure the Local Authority fulfilled 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 could 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 8 young people by the IRO in the period. In addition, the IRO had regard as to whether the child/young person's human rights were being breached in any way and, if so, could make a referral to CAF/CASS Cymru. This action was not required at any of the review meetings in the period. Councillor Alun Williams proceeded to present a Summary of the Key Points noted on page 2 of the report.

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

- In response to a question related to pathway plans, it was noted that from the number of young people eligible for this, only 60% had a plan in place by the required age- 15 years and 9 months of age. Care management had improved since the process had returned to Planned Care and they continued to actively explore ways to improve the process.
- Representatives from education and health would attend Pathway Plan Meetings in moving forward as part of a young person's transition.
- Committee Members thanked Officers for an informative workshop held recently on Out-of-County Placements.

- It was noted that Social Workers held regular reviews with children/ young people in care and placements were reviewed as part of the monitoring. Social Care staff were able to undertake ad-hoc visits if there were concerns for a child/ young person.

It was AGREED to note the contents of the report and the levels of activity with the Local Authority.

9 To confirm minutes of the previous meetings 22.01.25 and 06.02.25 and to consider any matters arising from those minutes

It was AGREED to confirm the minutes of the meeting held on 22.01.25 and 06.02.25.

Matters arising: None.

10 Forward Work Programme

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

- Committee Members were urged to contact the Overview and Scrutiny Officer or the Chair if there were any specific service areas they wished to request further information such as budgetary pressures not covered in the quarterly financial reports presented to the Committee.

Confirmed at the Meeting of the Healthier Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 10 June 2025

Chairman: _____

Date: _____