

## CEREDIGION COUNTY COUNCIL

<b>Report to:</b>	<b>Council</b>
<b>Date of meeting:</b>	<b>9 December 2021</b>
<b>Title:</b>	<b>Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report 2020/2021</b>
<b>Purpose of the report:</b>	<b>To provide information on the work of the Overview and Scrutiny Committees during 2020/2021</b>
<b>For:</b>	<b>Information</b>
<b>Cabinet Portfolio and Cabinet Member:</b>	<b>Report to be presented by Councillor Elizabeth Evans, Chair of Overview and Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee 2020/2021</b>

The Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report highlights the key issues that have been considered by the five Overview and Scrutiny Committees during 2020/2021.

There is a statutory duty on Local Authorities to publish an annual report relating to the work of the Overview and Scrutiny Committees. The Annual Report will be published in the Overview and Scrutiny webpage on the Council Website.

	<b>Has an Integrated Impact Assessment been completed? If, not, please state why</b>	No – this report does not refer to a Policy or Service Charge
<b>Wellbeing of Future Generations:</b>	<b>Summary:</b>	
	<b>Long term:</b>	Not applicable
	<b>Integration:</b>	Not applicable
	<b>Collaboration:</b>	Not applicable
	<b>Involvement:</b>	Not applicable
	<b>Prevention:</b>	Not applicable

**Recommendation(s):** The Council is requested to note the information contained within the report and the volume of work undertaken during 2020/2021.

**Reasons for decision:** To meet the statutory requirement to publish an annual report of Overview and Scrutiny Committees

**Overview and Scrutiny:** Considered by the Overview and Scrutiny Coordinating Committee 01.12.2021

**Policy Framework:**

**Corporate Priorities:**

- Boosting the Economy
- Investing in People's Futures
- Enabling Individual and Family Resilience
- Promoting Environmental and Community Resilience

**Financial implications:** None

**Statutory Powers:** Local Government Act 2000  
Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011

**Background Papers:** None

**Appendices:** Appendix A – Ceredigion County Council Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report 2019/2020

**Corporate Lead Officer:** Lowri Edwards, Corporate Lead Democratic Services

**Reporting Officer:** Lisa Evans, Standards and Scrutiny Officer  
Dwynwen Jones, Overview and Scrutiny Officer

**Date:** 11 October 2021



Ceredigion County Council  
Overview and Scrutiny  
Annual Report  
2020/21



## Introduction

### WHAT IS OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY?

Scrutiny Committees form part of the way in which local government in Wales operates. As well as the establishment of a decision making executive, the Local Government Act 2000 requires the establishment of one or more scrutiny committee to hold the decision makers to account, drive improvement, act as the voice of the community and play a role in assisting in policy development and review.

The Centre for Public Scrutiny (CfPS) advocates four key principles in support of effective Member scrutiny:

- i. Provide 'critical friend' challenge to executive policy makers and decision makers;
- ii. Enable the voice and concerns of the public and its communities to be heard;
- iii. Be carried out by 'independent minded governors' who lead and own the scrutiny process; and;
- iv. Is evidence based and drives improvement in public services.

The Statutory Guidance for County and County Borough Councils in Wales on Executive and Alternative Arrangements (2006) sets out that *Overview and Scrutiny committees are an essential and integral part of executive arrangements.*

In January 2017, the Welsh Government published a White Paper entitled Reforming Local Government: Resilient and Renewed. The White Paper sought views on proposals for mandatory regional working to deliver a range of services, address workforce issues and implement electoral reform. Welsh Government has since published a subsequent Green Paper explaining its ambitions and proposes a statement of intent for a stronger and more empowered local government in Wales. These proposals set out an approach for the future of local government "to deliver stronger, more resilient and sustainable public services with democratic accountability at its core".

When the pandemic hit, Ceredigion County Council's focus was to protect its residents and continue to operate its key functions. We have during this period learnt to scrutinise remotely, maintain a flexible approach to our forward work programmes and adapt to changing priorities. Remote working has taught us to streamline processes, maintain quality yet increase our flexibility and agility. Scrutiny Committees resumed their work programmes from September 2020. Committees have met regularly and resumed the priority scrutiny work.

This annual report is much shorter than of previous years. This was so that we did not place any undue burden on our Officers and Partners who were involved in the Covid response and recovery process.

It is true to say that the pandemic has had and continues to have an impact on people's lives, our communities and the manner in which the Council provides its services. Managing the emergency response to the Pandemic, the Recovery Period and the new normal is and has been an extremely challenging time for the Council and all other public sector organisations across Wales as we continue to face the challenges of the Covid-19 emergency. This has meant that the Council has had to change its way of working due to this global health emergency.

## **CALL-IN OF DECISIONS**



When a decision is made by the Cabinet, an individual member of Cabinet or a Committee of the Cabinet or under joint arrangements, the decision shall be published, including where possible by electronic means, and shall be available at the main offices of the Council normally within 2 working days of being made. Members will be sent copies of the records of all such decisions within 2 working days, by the person responsible for publishing the decision. That notice will bear the date on which it is published and will specify that the decision will come into force, and may then be implemented, on the expiry of 5 working days after the publication of the decision, unless any three members of the relevant Overview and Scrutiny Committee whose terms of reference relate to the Cabinet decision (as described in Article 6 of Part 2 of the Constitution) or six Elected Members of the Council and the Chair of that Committee, object to it and call it in. Further information in relation to the call-in process is available by referring to the Council's Constitution page 211. <http://www.ceredigion.gov.uk/your-council/about-the-council/the-councils-constitution/>

Ceredigion County Council received no call-in of decisions during this reporting period.

## **COMMITTEES**

There are 5 thematic Overview and Scrutiny Committees, namely:

- Co-ordinating



- Thriving Communities



- Learning Communities



- Healthier Communities



- Corporate Resources



Under section 21 of the Local Government Act 2000, there are a given wide-ranging powers of review and scrutiny, and the ability to make reports and recommendations on any matters relevant to the area and its inhabitants. The guidance sets out the role of Councillors exercising overview and scrutiny as being:

- i. to hold the executive to account for the efficient exercise of executive functions – especially the performance of the executive as measured against the standards, objectives and targets set out in the policies and plans which it is implementing;
- ii. to assist in the improvement and development of the Council's policies by evaluating whether they are achieving their stated objectives, whether those policies and the way they are being implemented reflect the needs and priorities of local communities and by reporting and making recommendations to the executive or the Full Council;
- iii. to review and make reports on issues which affect the authority's area or its residents; and

- iv. to examine whether the systems the executive has in place to deliver its functions are robust and are being properly observed.

In addition, they can review the discharge of non-executive functions and report on matters of more general local concern. This could link with the authority's power under Part 1 of the Act to promote economic, social and environmental well being, by identifying areas which the executive could address using this power.

The Local Government (Wales) Measure 2009 sets out a clear role for an authority's scrutiny function in its improvement processes: as part of its role in holding local decision makers and policy makers to account, and in its policy development role. This should extend to:

- i. scrutiny of the processes that an authority has gone through in the discharge of the general duty to improve;
- ii. scrutiny of the fitness of the organisation to discharge the general duty to improve;
- iii. scrutiny of the processes that the authority has gone through in the selection of its improvement objectives, including a review of the level of engagement with stakeholders;
- iv. scrutiny of the monitoring of the progress of the delivery of the authority's improvement objectives;
- v. promoting innovation by challenging the status quo and encourage different ways of thinking and options for delivery.

Under Section 35 of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015, Local Authorities are required to ensure their Overview and Scrutiny Committees has the power to scrutinise decisions made, or other action taken, by the Public Services Board (PSB) for the Local Authority's area in the exercise of its functions.

During the previous reporting year, members of the Co-ordinating Overview and Scrutiny considered and discussed matters pertaining to the Scrutiny of the Ceredigion Public Service Board (PSB).

In order to comply with legislation and to ensure that effective Overview and Scrutiny arrangements are put in place for the Ceredigion PSB, it was agreed that Ceredigion County Council's Co-ordinating Overview and Scrutiny Committee take responsibility for taking an overview of the overall effectiveness of the Board.

The Ceredigion County Council Co-ordinating Overview and Scrutiny Committee agreed the following approach for taking an overview of the overall effectiveness of the PSB:

- Review or scrutinise the **decisions made or actions taken** by the Board by:
  - Acting as a formal consultee for the Assessment of Local Well-being
  - Acting as a formal consultee for the Local Well-being Plan

- Receiving the Annual Progress Report
  - Receiving PSB minutes
  - Receiving performance monitoring reports.
- i. Review or scrutinise the Board's **governance arrangements** by:
    - Receiving the PSB Terms of Reference following each Mandatory Meeting of the Board (A 'mandatory meeting' of the Board must be held no later than 60 days after each subsequent ordinary election of councillors).
    - Inviting members of the Board to give evidence in respect of the exercise of joint functions, (but only in respect of the exercise of joint functions conferred on them as a statutory member of the Board under the Well-being of Future Generations Act).
  - ii. Make reports or recommendations to the Board regarding its functions or governance arrangements.
  - iii. Refer matters to the relevant Thematic Overview and Scrutiny Committee to consider further, as appropriate.
  - iv. Present the recommendations from Scrutiny to Cabinet, the PSB and the relevant sub-group.

**Scrutiny Committees can undertake their work in one of the following ways:**

- i. Consider a topic during a formal meeting;
- ii. Establish a Task and Finish Group to investigate a topic in more detail;
- iii. Consider at a Work Stream (please see under Learning Communities Overview and Scrutiny heading on page 52 below); and
- iv. Undertake site visits.

The Overview and Scrutiny Committees focused on areas where they could have the greatest influence on outcomes for people of Ceredigion. This has led to a variety of topics being reviewed, some which are still ongoing.

The Members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committees have worked hard to create a culture where transparency, involvement and accountability are welcomed and where challenge is seen as a vital and positive part of improving outcomes. It remains essential that Overview and Scrutiny continues to contribute positively to supporting the delivery of the Council's priorities through its critical friend role.

**Self-evaluation of Scrutiny**

A review of the effectiveness of Overview and Scrutiny is undertaken annually. The questionnaire can be completed online. 15 (out of a possible 42) responses were received to the 2020/21 questionnaire.



## Overview and Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee

The Overview and Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee met on three occasions during the municipal year 2020/2021.



Standard items considered at each Overview and Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee includes an update on developments in the Scrutiny function, and an update by the Chairs on the work of their Committees. This provides a clear focus for the work of the themed Committees.

### Key Issues considered

The role of the Co-ordinating Committee is to oversee all the Overview and Scrutiny Committees Forward Work Programmes to ensure that they are relevant and reflect the corporate priorities and focus on key areas. The Committee also ensures that the Forward Work Programmes are coordinated to avoid duplication, ensuring they are realistic and manageable within the resources available, and that they will add value. Each Committee agree to consider their individual Forward Work Programmes.

The Chief Executive and Corporate Director presented Ceredigion County Council's response to Covid-19. The Chief Executive informed Members that from the outset Ceredigion County Council's priority was to protect its residents and to minimise the number of the population who would contract the coronavirus and the associated number of deaths. It was reported that it had been an extremely challenging period for everyone.

It was reported that a Gold Command Group was immediately established comprising the Council's Senior Management Team which met daily since mid-March, leading on the Council's response to COVID-19. On 25th March 2020, the Council Leader and Deputy Leader agreed temporary delegated powers to the Council's Chief Executive and Leadership Group to make decisions relating to the Council's COVID-19 response. The delegation of authority was made in accordance with the Council's Constitution. Supporting Gold Command Group are the following 5 Silver Command Groups, which report weekly to Gold Command:

1. Contact Tracing and Testing

2. Economic Adjustment
3. School re-opening
4. Excess Deaths (now stood down)
5. Homelessness (now stood down).

The Chief Executive and the Leader met at least once a week with representatives from Hywel Dda University Health Board, the WLGA and other Wales Local Authority Leaders and Chief Executives, the Member of Parliament and Member of the Senedd. Regular briefings were provided to Cabinet Members and Leader of the Opposition.

The following actions taken were referenced:

- Reduced Ceredigion to its core resident population, working with Universities, and the tourism sector to close their facilities;
- No visitors to Care Homes;
- Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) Hub was set up;
- Administered Grant support to businesses (over £28 million has been allocated during the coronavirus period to Ceredigion businesses);
- Public Protection Team supporting Businesses to ensure compliance with social distancing requirements and new regulations;
- The medically vulnerable and those shielding were contacted to ensure food and medication was delivered;
- Weekly food boxes sourced locally to over 950 vulnerable citizens, with staff contacting 2,500 individuals on a regular basis (159 compliments received in relation to the food boxes and regular contact) – following the Welsh Government announcements, the food boxes came to an end on the 16th August 2020);
- Temporary accommodation has been provided for the homeless;
- Individuals and Groups volunteered delivering food and medicine to those shielding;
- Childcare for children of frontline service workers provided;
- Face shields produced by many staff at Secondary Schools in the County.

Members were advised that an in-house contact tracing system was developed by the Council at the beginning of April 2020, bringing together a team of staff with skillsets in environmental health tracing, data protection, human resources and ICT data systems. The data management system was informed by the environmental health officers who had experience of tracking and tracing other outbreaks such as legionella and food poisoning. The Council then became part of the national Test, Trace, Protect scheme.

From the outset, Ceredigion County Council has worked in close collaboration with the Hywel Dda University Health Board, Dyfed-Powys Police, Aberystwyth University, businesses and numerous voluntary and charitable groups to ensure effective partnership working.

The adjustment phase and the Council's long term resilience was discussed. The purpose of the third phase was to establish medium to long-term strategies that will identify new working practices that can continue through to the end of the COVID-19 outbreak.

### **OUTCOME AND/OR IMPACT**

*A Committee Member raised a concern regarding certain locations being placed under local lockdown restrictions, and residents from those areas travelling to Ceredigion to stay in their second homes, to avoid their local lockdown restrictions. Disappointment was expressed that stricter restriction rules have not been put in place by Welsh Government. In response to this concern, it was confirmed that there have been discussions with Welsh Government regarding this matter.*

*Concern was raised that the older population find it difficult to accept that they can no longer use cash and have to revert to using cashless cards at most shops etc. It was suggested providing support and guidance to support the elderly.*

An Overview of the Objectives and Achievements of the Mid and West Wales Safeguarding Children & Adults Board to the Equality Act 2010 and the Public Sector Equality Duty 2011 was presented to the Committee.

The Statutory Director of Social Services & Corporate Lead Officer: Porth Cynnal, Adult Social Care presented the Annual Report for 2018/2019 outlining the progress that has been made against the outcomes set by CYSUR and CWMPAS in March 2018 as part of the joint Annual Strategic Plan.

### **OUTCOME AND/OR IMPACT**

*Committee Members agreed to note the report for information as the Committee with responsibility for Safeguarding issues.*

The CYSUR Local Operational Group Safeguarding Report quarters 2,3, and 4 2019/2020 was also presented to the Committee.

### **OUTCOME AND/OR IMPACT**

*The Committee were advised following a question from a Member regarding staff capacity that recruiting staff at present is not problematic as there appears to be an increase in young people wishing to pursue a career in Social Work. The Trainee Social Work Scheme also works very well in Ceredigion. It was also confirmed that there is continuous communication between the Health Board and the Police Force.*

The Ceredigion Local Well-being Annual Report for 2019-20 was considered by the Committee. The Public Services Board (PSB) is required to produce and publish annual reports relating to the delivery of their Wellbeing Plans. It is a statutory requirement of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 that annual reports are scrutinised by local PSB Overview and Scrutiny Committees. Unlike the assessments of well-being and the well-being plans, the PSB does not have to wait on the scrutiny panel recommendations to approve annual reports. The Board,

however, is encouraged to use Scrutiny recommendations in developing work programmes and future reporting. Following correspondence from Welsh Government in May 2020, there was recognition of the impact of Covid-19 on PSB Organisations, with staff needing to be deployed to assist and respond to emerging operational matters. As a consequence, PSB Members were able to consider a lighter approach for the 2019-2020 Annual Report, having due regard to the significant impact on PSB organisations and communities. The 6 wellbeing aims delivered by the project groups were referred to with future planning now focused through a covid-19 lens and those project groups that have met during the past 6 months have re-visited their delivery plans with this in mind.

Reference was made to the work undertaken by the 'Understanding our Communities project group'. The rapid development of Community support groups early on in the Covid-19 lockdown demonstrated the value of very local support in response to a crisis. Mapping of this support into layered maps has helped to geographically capture organisations and community support groups that are responding to Covid19, including Food Banks, Community and Town Councils, Community Connectors and Local Support Groups. Through this work, it has been possible to identify areas of potential gaps and implement mechanisms to support those groups where there is less coverage in provision. This has provided a good foundation for Community and Town Councils and others who are active in their communities, to engage further with their communities in the future.

#### **OUTCOME AND/OR IMPACT**

*A concern was raised regarding the PSB Organisations not fully considering integrating their Services creating single location shared hubs. This message was relayed to the PSB members at the next meeting.*

*A Councillor wished to remind the PSB members to involve Town and Community Councils in all engagement especially those of rural areas. It was agreed that this point would be emphasised at the next PSB meeting.*

*It was confirmed that Councillors are welcome to observe PSB meetings.*

*It was agreed to receive the Ceredigion PSB Local Well-being Plan Annual Report as presented.*

The Committee considered the 2019/20 Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report prior to being presented to Council

#### **OUTCOME AND/OR IMPACT**

*Council noted the Annual Report.*

The CYSUR/CWMPAS Combined Local Operational Group Safeguarding Report Qtr 1, 2020/21 was considered later in the municipal year.

## **OUTCOME AND/OR IMPACT**

A summary of the following key points were considered:

- *There was a decrease in the number of referrals regarding children that led to action taken under Wales Safeguarding Procedures from the previous quarter but this number remains consistent with this time last year.*
- *The main concerns that led to completing child protection enquiries were allegations of physical and sexual abuse.*
- *There was a marked improvement in the percentage of initial child protection conferences held in the required timescale.*
- *The main risk factors recorded were domestic abuse, parental separation, parental substance misuse and parental mental health difficulties.*
- *The number of children on the Child Protection Register was reduced by 9 children, but this remains within the usual range.*
- *There was a decrease in the number of reports received regarding adults at risk from the previous quarter and a large decrease in reports received during the same quarter in 2019. The Q1 period covers the period when strict Social Distancing Guidance came into force and during this period there was a considerable decrease in the number of reports received to the Adult Safeguarding Service. At the beginning of the second quarter, during the months of July and August, there was a marked increase in reports received. The team receiving 123 reports up until the end of August.*
- *Managers of care home settings, Local Authority Housing staff and Social Work staff were the main source of reports re adults at risk in Q1, with social work staff and Local Authority Housing staff reporting concerns regarding domestic abuse situations or concerns.*
- *Emotional/Psychological abuse was the principal reported category of abuse re adults at risk that occurred in Quarter 1.*
- *During this Quarter there was 1 on-going large scale police investigation relating to allegations made against staff in a residential care home caring for people with learning disabilities.*
- *The Adult Safeguarding Team is progressing work with Nick Andrews, Research and Practice Development Officer from Swansea University, to develop a Quality Assurance framework to enable us to collate meaningful evaluations from individuals/families who have been through the Safeguarding process.*

The Committee received updates on the Gold Command COVID-19 action decision log.

**OUTCOME AND/OR IMPACT**

*Concern was raised that Local Members are not always notified of issues affecting their local area and a request was made that this message is relayed back to Gold Command to remind them of the importance of communicating with Local Members.*

*An explanation was provided to the concerns that planning site visits weren't able to take place at that time.*

The Committee receive regular reports on the Monitoring of the Authority's use of the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 ('RIPA'). The report covered RIPA Activity, data handling and retention safeguards, corporate RIPA policy and procedures, the Council RIPA Social Media policy, and training.

**OUTCOME AND/OR IMPACT**

*The Committee agreed to:*

- 1) note that there has been no RIPA activity by any service of the Council during the period 1st August 2019 to the 30th of November 2020.*
- 2) note the content of the draft amended Corporate RIPA Policy and procedures document*

The minutes of the Ceredigion Public Services Board meetings are regularly reported to the Committee. They also consider the PSB Project Groups' reports.

**OUTCOME AND/OR IMPACT**

*It was recommended that there should be a representative from Town/Community Councils on the Board and it was confirmed that a representative from Un Llais Cymru is currently a Board Member. Another Member made a recommendation that it would be beneficial for Committee Members if members of the individual Project Groups could attend future Committee meetings to provide updates on their ongoing work. The Chair fed back this request at the next Public Service Board (PSB) meeting. Members agreed to receive the minutes and agreed to receive the reports from the Project Groups.*

The Committee considered the Strategic Equality Plan (SEP) Monitoring Report 2019-2020.

**OUTCOME AND/OR IMPACT**

*Members agreed to receive and endorse the Strategic Equality Plan (SEP) monitoring report April 2019 to March 2020 as presented; subject to specifying on page 20 of the report that there is a playground in Llandygwydd which is owned by Tai Ceredigion.*

The Socio-Economic Duty (SED) was considered by committee prior to its commencement. Its purpose was explained to Committee Members, which is to

include the proposed SED question set within the Council's Integrated Impact Assessment Tool. The following points were made:

- Section 45 of the Wales Act 2017 devolves power to Welsh Ministers to commence the Socio-Economic Duty to the Welsh Government.
- This involves enacting Part 1, Section 1 of the Equality Act 2010.
- Part 1, Section 1 of the 2010 Act requires specified public bodies, when making strategic decisions such as 'deciding priorities and setting objectives,' to consider how their decisions might help to reduce the inequalities associated with socio-economic disadvantage.
- In broad terms the duty is a requirement to undertake a poverty impact assessment.
- It is proposed that additional text and questions are added to the Council's Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA), Template.

### **OUTCOME AND/OR IMPACT**

*Committee Members agreed to receive and endorse the proposed SED question set to be included within the Council's Integrated Impact Assessment Tool. They also recommended that a Full Members Workshop is held on this topic in the near future.*

The Leader of the Council, presented the report on the draft budget for 2021/2022 including the three year capital programme. It was noted that the total revenue settlement allocated to Ceredigion reflects an increase of 2% as compared to 2020/21 which is the lowest settlement in Wales. The settlement reflected a range of less financially favourable re-distributional movements including a reduction in the population projected figures as well as nursery/primary school pupil numbers.

### **OUTCOME AND/OR IMPACT**

*A discussion took place regarding re-allocation of savings if a funding floor was introduced, and it was noted that Cabinet would review any amendments that came to light. Members also noted their concerns regarding potential job losses and the impact upon school pupils if the formula funding is reduced as a result of lower pupil numbers, and asked for further information regarding joint purchasing and the capital funding programme for county farms resulting from 3 the new Nitrate Vulnerable Zones legislation. It was also noted that due to COVID-19 and furlough, this is an extremely challenging time for the residents of Ceredigion.*

*The discussion concluded with an explanation of why there was a need for a Council Tax rise of 3.5% when general inflation is currently running lower than this and many residents are struggling. It was explained that the Councils Band D Council Tax is below the average of the All Wales level and when the detailed cost pressures being faced by Services are looked at, the Council is typically facing inflationary pressures of 5% to 6%pa - which has been a recurring level for several years. Whilst an element of this relates to Pay award, the greater part relates to pressures on front line service*

*(e.g. Social Care) part driven by volumes and part driven by external factors such as the Living Wage.*

*With this 5% to 6% level of annual inflation, the level of funding from WG is not keeping pace with inflation and therefore a greater burden is falling on the Council Tax payer. Within this backdrop the Council is still consistently delivering a full range of services which are either rated Excellent, Very Good or Good and Audit Wales have commended the Council on its approach to financial management and overall financial resilience.*

*Members were advised to raise concerns regarding specific service areas at the relevant Scrutiny committees. It was agreed to note the report.*

### **Crime and Disorder matters**

Sections 19 and 20 of the Police and Justice Act 2006, together with the Crime and Disorder (Overview and Scrutiny) Regulations 2009, came into force on the 1<sup>st</sup> October 2009.

They require the Council to have in place:

- A 'crime and disorder scrutiny committee' with the role of scrutinising the work of the Ceredigion Community Safety Partnership and its constituent bodies in respect of their community safety functions,
- A procedure for the overview and scrutiny committee, including the partnership and its constituent bodies to deal with Councillor calls for action when dealing with community safety matters.

The Council's existing Overview and Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee undertook the responsibilities for crime and disorder matters.



## Learning Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee

The Learning Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee met on 5 occasions during the municipal year 2020/2021.



### Key issues considered

The Forward Work Programme was monitored and updated at each Committee meeting as a standing item on each agenda.

The support for the schools during lockdown and beyond was considered by the scrutiny committee. The Chief Education Officer provided Members with a power point presentation in order to highlight the report in greater detail and to provide information provided to schools during this time. The following information was presented:-

- School Closure background
- Childcare hubs
- Supporting Learning
  - Teams sites to support
  - Support prior to the 20th March 2020
  - Supporting Families
  - On-line tasks
  - Distance Learning
  - Video Clips
  - Training for 'live streaming'
  - Digital surgeries
  - Blended learning
  - Remote Learning website
  - Learning Guide Action Plan-Summer Term (Five themes)
  - Accelerated Learning (ALP) 'Dysgu Carlam Ceredigion'
    - Health and Emotional Wellbeing
    - Literacy
    - 'Y Daith Darllen'
    - Numeracy
    - Website – resource for pupils who have to self - isolate

- Support specific groups
  - Digital Poverty
  - Supporting specific groups of pupils
  - Safeguarding
  - Pupils in receipt of Free School Meals
  - Additional Learning Needs
  - Working with other services
  - Summer Activities
  
- Supporting the re-opening of Schools
  - Covid – Guidance on schools re-opening from September 2020
  - Risk Assessments
  - PPE
  - Partial School closures
  - Communication

Ms Mair Hughes, Head teacher Penglais School, Mr Owain Jones, Head teacher, Aberaeron Comprehensive, Ms Nia Thomas, Head teacher, Bro Sion Cwilt Primary School and Mr Eirwyn Griffiths, Head teacher, Aberporth Primary School attended to provide evidence to the Committee.

### **OUTCOME AND/OR IMPACT**

*The following issues were raised by Members and addressed by the Chief Education Officer together with the head teachers that were in attendance:*

- *Concern that pupils with non-speaking Welsh parents were unable to assist their Children during lockdown with home schooling and had therefore decided to take their children out of the Welsh Medium School and enrol them in schools whereby English was the language of the school. In response, the Chief Education Officer reported that currently this was not a pattern and if it was, it would be addressed by the Education Service accordingly. The Welsh Language Centre had also continued to provided Welsh lesson remotely to pupils during this time.*
- *That the communication during lock down between teachers and pupils and their parents by a weekly telephone call had been vital to confirm the well being of all pupils. In some instances, it had benefited teacher and parental relationships.*
- *Members were informed by the Head teachers that the use of the systems to assist teachers to teach through technology had encouraged teachers to broaden their IT skills, this had been a very positive step for all schools.*
- *It was suggested by a Member that remote teaching could assist pupils further in their education to raise their standards. It was reported by the Chief Education Officer that Webinars were due to be held after half term to assist pupils with , Biology, Chemistry and Physics, these were a three quarter of an hour lesson. It would also be recorded in order for the pupil to revisit the lesson if they were not clear on a specific topic discussed. It was suggested that Members of the Standards of School Workstream attend these webinars to ascertain the way the lessons were taught and report back to the Committee*

accordingly. The Chief Officer reported that she would ascertain if Councillors could attend due to safeguarding issues, however, if this was not possible, the recording of the webinar would be available to them.

- Due to the winter period ahead and a possibility of a 'spike' in covid cases if there would be sufficient staff to keep the schools open, also staff who had to self isolate that could not attend schools. In response, the Chief Education Officer stated that the safety of the staff and its pupils was paramount and if staff that were isolating were well, could contribute to work of the school remotely. There were also robust plans in place by all schools to address the 'spike' however, Head teachers do have the statutory powers to close a school for health and safety reasons such as insufficient staffing levels.
- Following the announcement in Scotland that pupils would not be sitting exams next year it was reported that an announcement for Wales was due in November. Meetings were due to be held with WG to discuss exams in Wales. Input from all Chief Education Officers and a Head teacher representative from all Counties would be considered.
- An update on the impact of Covid in our schools would be provided at all future meetings
- A number of pupils had deregistered from school to avoid not receiving non - attendance fines as the parents did not feel comfortable with their children attending school, even though all safeguarding procedures were in place. Also a number of home schooling children had registered to attend school prior to the lockdown, they had all returned to school.

Consideration was given to the Childcare Sufficiency Assessment Year 3 Progress. The nine recommendations contained in the report were discussed by the Committee.

### **OUTCOME AND/OR IMPACT**

*The Committee made a recommendation to Cabinet that a letter be sent to Welsh Government requesting them to consider that grants targeting the 0-7 age range are provided through RSG and not grant funding (schemes Flying Start, Families First), this was due to the difficulty in planning ahead for this provision over a 3 year strategy; also that these monies be ring fenced as other childcare provision in the RSG childcare budget. Cabinet stated that they could not support the recommendation of the Learning Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee as the grant is for four counties and cannot be placed in the RSG.*

Consideration was given to the Home to School Transport Policy. It was reported that the Home to school transport for entitled pupils within the Local Authority is arranged with local transport operators. The Home to School Transport Policy was reviewed and adopted in September 2016, when the introduction of a charge of £390 per annum was included for spare seat provision for non-entitled pupils. Since the introduction of the charge in September 2018, approximately £7,000 income has been received per annum.

Due to the proposed introduction of the Public Service Vehicles Accessibility Regulations 2000 (PSVAR), it was necessary to amend the home to school transport policy and remove the reference to spare seat provision and the charge for it. The process with regards to submitting an appeal when transport had been refused was

also updated and clarified to reflect the Local Authority Constitution with regards the transport appeal panel.

### **OUTCOME AND/OR IMPACT**

*The Committee agreed to recommend to Cabinet the approval of the policy.*

Committee Members were requested to consider the draft budget being recommended by Cabinet for 2021/2022, together with the Cost Reduction/Budget Savings Proposals 2021/22, and proposed changes to the Council's Fees and Charges 2021/22 relevant to the Learning Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

### **OUTCOME AND/OR IMPACT**

*During discussions, the following points were raised:*

- *Concerns were raised that parents would remove their children from the school register due to their concerns over covid-19. It was confirmed that the department is working closely with schools and parents to ensure that children remain on the register to maintain wellbeing links if parents choose for their children not to return to school immediately.*
- *Members questioned if a new partnership post ERW would be formed which would require funding. Officers stated that there were no formal plans being discussed at present. A paper on School Improvement through Regional Working: a review of ERW impact on school improvement and value for money will be consider by scrutiny at the next meeting.*
- *A Member suggested raising Council Tax to address the cost pressures in the delegated school budget.*
- *Officers confirmed that there would be a consultation on the closure of the canteens at Canolfan Rheidol and Penmorfa.*
- *It was suggested that a review of how education is delivered across the County needs to be undertaken including sixth form provision.*
- *Members praised Schools Services for the recent Estyn inspection.*

*Following consideration, the majority of Members agreed to recommend that Cabinet:*

- 1. APPROVE the service areas budget within the Committee's remit as above; and;*
- 2. APPROVE the proposed Fees and Charges as outlined in Appendix 2 of the report, (pages 15-16 of 51)*
- 3. APPROVE the relevant Capital schemes in the proposed Capital Programme*

Consideration was given to the Report of the Corporate Lead Officer – Schools upon the School Improvement through Regional Working: a review of ERW impact on school improvement and value for money. The report had been presented in order to inform the committee upon the conclusion of the Council's position on the ERW Consortium, the need to comply with the ERW Legal Agreement, and the notice of withdrawal issued by the Leader on 17.3.2020 in order to complete the withdrawal process from the ERW Consortium.

The following information that had led to the agreement to withdraw from the ERW Consortium was presented to the Committee:-

- Background
- Current Situation
- Erw Support

- Value of Money
- Risks of Withdrawal

### **OUTCOME AND/OR IMPACT**

*The Committee recommended that Cabinet notes:*

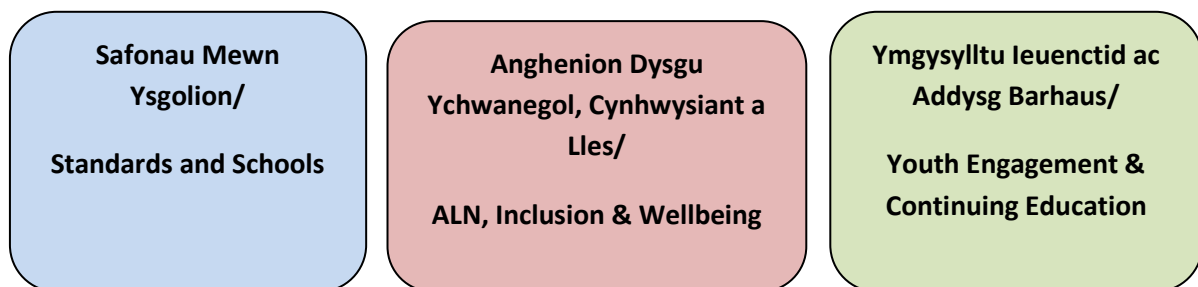
*(i) that the notice of withdrawal issued by the Leader on 17.3.20 stands as served,*

*(ii) agrees that the Council will withdraw from the ERW Consortium on 31st March 2021; and*

*(iii) If no ii) above was agreed, that delegated authority be granted to the Chief Executive and the Chief Education Officer/CLO-Schools and Culture in consultation with the Leader of Council and the Cabinet Member, to take all necessary actions and, to enter into all necessary agreements, to complete the withdrawal from ERW process.*

### **Workstreams**

The workstreams comprise of members from the Learning Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee and the Chairman attends and contribute to all three.



### **OUTCOME AND/OR IMPACT**

*Workstreams have not met during 2020/21 due to the impact of covid-19. Feedback was provided to the Learning Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee from the workstreams held during 2019/20.*

## Thriving Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee

The Thriving Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee met on 3 occasions during the municipal year 2020/2021.



### Key issues considered:

The Forward Work Programme was monitored and updated at each regular Committee meeting as a standing item on each agenda.

The Committee reviewed the impact of Coronavirus on the Economy of Ceredigion. They considered the current known impact on the Ceredigion economy, the support measures that have been introduced in Ceredigion and the measures currently being planned and implemented to address the challenges being faced by the economy.

### **OUTCOME AND/OR IMPACT**

*During discussion, several points were raised which included the following:*

- i. Concerns were raised in relation to rising unemployment figures and the anxiety of those who are currently employed as furlough ends. The closure of Job Centres in most small towns will make it difficult for people in rural areas who have lost their work to afford travel costs to their nearest Job Centre. It was noted that as the job retention scheme comes into force, the conditions are different from furlough.*
- ii. It was noted that working from home would become the norm and widespread in future therefore workers would not necessarily have to live in the area where they work.*
- iii. More work is required in relation to training and raising awareness of caring as a skilled profession.*
- iv. Concerns were raised in relation to children living in poverty.*
- v. The need for improvements to the County's infrastructure was noted along with a requirement for a strong strategy to gain investment from WG.*

- vi. *The need for affordable housing in the county would now be even greater as house prices have risen significantly over the past few months.*
- vii. *There is also a great need for a strategy to aid small, rural towns.*
- viii. *The strategy for the Council's assets will be looked into. The use of empty properties may be offered to people who wish to start up or expand their businesses.*
- ix. *Digital connectivity was noted as an area of concern in many parts of the County.*

*The Committee recommended to Cabinet:*

- *That a strategy is needed to help the County's small towns*
- *That more work is needed to improve digital connectivity*
- *More emphasis is placed to help rural poverty*
- *More support is provided for young people to establish businesses during these times*

The Committee consider the report on the draft budget being recommended by Cabinet for 2021/2022, together with the Cost Reduction/Budget Savings Proposals 2021/22, and proposed changes to the Council's Fees and Charges 2021/22 relevant to the Thriving Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

### **OUTCOME AND/OR IMPACT**

*During discussions, the following points were raised:*

- *An explanation was provided that the bwcabus service would not be affected due to the reduced bwcabus contribution.*
- *Members questioned the effect that the Water Resources (Control of Agricultural Pollution) (Wales) Regulations 2021 would have on our County Farms and would the financial responsibility if improvements are required fall on the Council or the tenant. Officers responded that each lease would have to be looked at individually.*
- *Emphasis was placed on providing support where possible to new businesses.*
- *Concerns were raised over the amount of planning enforcement matters and if one planning enforcement officer was sufficient. An explanation was provided that planning officers were now also undertaking an enforcement role.*
- *Consideration should be given to the option of hiring Penmorfa as a conferencecentre for events;*
- *Option of hiring work spaces in our office buildings to people not employed by the Council;*
- *Democratic Services Committee to consider a hybrid system of attending Council meetings in the future where Councillors will have the option of attending remotely;*
- *Councillor Evans proposed that the proposed fees listed on page 33 in relation to Regent Street Car Park Two Hours stay (proposed increase from £1.90 to £2) is reduced to £1.60; and Per-Day parking in Aberaeron (proposed increase from £3 to £3.10) is increased to £3.50.*

*Following consideration, the majority of Members agreed to recommend that Cabinet:*

1. *APPROVE the service areas budget within the Committee's remit as above; and;*

2. *APPROVE the proposed Fees and Charges as outlined in Appendix 3 of the report, (pages 17-44 of 51) subject to consideration of the following recommendation:*
  - *That the proposed fees listed on page 33 in relation to Regent Street Car Park Two Hours stay (proposed increase from £1.90 to £2) is reduced to £1.60; and Per-Day parking in Aberaeron (proposed increase from £3 to £3.10) is increased to £3.50.*
3. *APPROVE the relevant Capital schemes in the proposed Capital Programme.*

*Cabinet approved the changes in Fees and Charges in relation to Regent Street Car Park Two Hours stay (proposed increase from £1.90 to £2) is reduced to £1.80; and Per-Day parking in Aberaeron (proposed increase from £3 to £3.10) is increased to £3.60.*

The Committee received a report on the response to the consultation on the Ceredigion Economic Strategy document 'Boosting Ceredigion's Economy - A Strategy for Action 2020-35' in order that the Committee may review the responses to the consultation on the Strategy and to consider recommendations to the Cabinet as it prepares to adopt the Strategy.

The purpose of the strategy is to inform Ceredigion County Council's approach and action to support the growth of the economy of Ceredigion over the next 15 years. The plan will be a framework for supporting the economy of Ceredigion - focused on the areas within the influence of Ceredigion CC to make a difference to the economy – i.e. how it uses its capital, human and revenue assets to positively impact the economy in Ceredigion over that timeframe. Whilst its focus is on the activities controlled and managed by the County Council, it will also cover its key role in various partnerships that will also help drive the economy of Ceredigion. It will inform service-level action and business planning in the future.

### **OUTCOME AND/OR IMPACT**

*The Committee recommended that Cabinet give consideration to the concerns of the Committee that development will be limited in certain areas of Ceredigion due to the NRW decision in relation to new developments along riverine Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) because of the potential to increase phosphate levels within the SAC.*

The need to develop an Ash Dieback Action Plan (ADAP) was reported to Scrutiny on 5<sup>th</sup> November 2019. The ADAP is required in order to provide the Council with a mechanism to manage the risks posed by ash dieback, thereby minimising health & safety, economic and environmental impacts and avoiding the risk of reputational damage to the Council.

Dealing with Ash Dieback was noted as a significant health and safety priority for the council. Discussions in relation to costs is ongoing with the finance service but costs are not part of budgetary pressures thus far. Many members noted that costings in relation to buying the relevant plant and machinery necessary and undertaking the work in house should be explored along with using trees felled on council owned land for bio-mass purposes. Affected Ash wood becomes very brittle therefore is not suitable for the wood works industry.



### **OUTCOME AND/OR IMPACT**

*The Committee agreed to approve the ADAP and to ensure that resources, human and financial, are secured for its successful implementation and delivery. This is to provide the Council with a mechanism to manage the risks posed by ash dieback, thereby minimising health & safety, economic and environmental impacts and avoiding the risk of reputational damage to the Council. The Committee would continue to monitor the position within the County.*

The Committee received a report to inform them of the latest available data in relation to Holiday Lets and Second Homes countywide in order to follow up the motion to Council and to further investigate the number, spread and impact of second homes on the county of Ceredigion. Ceredigion has lower rates of second home ownership and holiday lets (5.91%) than our neighbouring coastal authorities Gwynedd 10.77% and Pembrokeshire 9.15% but we have higher rates compared to non-coastal authorities. Ceredigion has the fourth highest rate of holiday let and second home ownership of local authorities in Wales.

### **OUTCOME AND/OR IMPACT**

*The Thriving Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee agreed to endorse the Motion proposed to Council:*

*Ceredigion County Council calls on the Welsh Government to:*

- 1. add a new clause to the Planning Act so that it is compulsory to make a planning application before obtaining the right to convert a residential home into a holiday home or a holiday let*
- 2. adapt the policy framework to allow for maximum thresholds to be set with regard to the number of holiday homes in a given area*
- 3. make it compulsory for second-home owners to ask for planning permission before turning a second home into a holiday business or an Air BnB business*

*The Thriving Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee also agreed to recommend to Council that a 100% increase is levied on the council tax of holiday homes in the county.*

*The Council considered the recommendations alongside the motion and resolved to:*

- 1. Agree the motion as stated;*
- 2. note the recommendations made by the Thriving Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee and the Language Committee; and*
- 3. that Officers prepare a report for consideration by Council regarding the Thriving Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee's recommendation that a 100% increase is levied on the council tax of holiday homes in the County.*

## Corporate Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee

The Corporate Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee met twice during the municipal year 2020/2021.



### Key Issues considered

The purpose of this committee is to fulfil all the functions relating to the Authorities Corporate Services (including human resources, customer services, ICT, treasury management and legal services), Inclusion/Equal Opportunities, Civil Contingencies, Business Continuity, Estates Management and Civil Registration.



The Council's Annual Report for Compliments, Complaints and Freedom of Information requests (FOI) activity received during the period 1st April 2019 – 31st March 2020 was presented at the 25<sup>th</sup> November 2020 Committee meeting.

Committee Members were presented with a comprehensive overview of the compliments, complaints and Freedom of Information (FOI) activity received by the Authority in the previous financial year. The report also included information on complaints referred to the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales during the period.

The Corporate Compliments and Freedom of Information Manager provided Members with an informative background presentation to the service and an update on the current situation. The report would also be presented to Full Council on the 10<sup>th</sup> December 2020 for all Members information.

### **OUTCOME/IMPACT**

*Members were complimentary of the report and the effective procedures the Authority has in place for the handling of complaints. It was noted that this was the first report in almost a decade where there had been no Public Services Ombudsman for Wales investigations commenced or reports issued in relation to complaints made against the Council. Members were also assured that the necessary systems were in place to record, analyse and report as well as learning lessons from complaints.*

*The Corporate Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee had been monitoring complaints as it was previously an item recorded on the Authority's Risk Register.*

At the same meeting, Members of the Corporate Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee considered an update report on Social Care Wales Workforce Development Programme (SCWWDP).



### **OUTCOME AND/OR IMPACT**

*The Learning and Development Team located within the Authority's People and Organisation Service work with colleagues in Carmarthenshire and Pembrokeshire County Council to submit a regional grant application to Social Care Wales for SCWWDP grant. The purpose of the grant is to fund training provision for the internal and external social care workforce. The grant has a criteria dictating how the funding should be used with each of the three authorities receiving an allocated amount.*

*The governance and monitoring of the grant consists of the following regionally compiled reports to Social Care Wales:*

- *Grant application*
- *Mid-year report*
- *End of year report*

*These are then approved and authorised by the three Directors of Social Services and are presented to the West Wales Workforce Board. Welsh Audit Office also undertake and annual audit. Previous audits for 18/19 and 19/20 were both 'clean and with no qualification'.*

*Of the total grant that Ceredigion received in 19/20, Ceredigion's LA SCWWDP expenditure of £252,576 was made up as follows; £109,393 was used to support training, £38,730 for formal qualifications and £104,453 towards salaries including training officers, administration and management.*

*Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, in March 2020, all face-to-face training delivery was suspended, however, with Gold Command approval the essential face to face manual handling training required by frontline staff care workers was delivered safely and in accordance and complying with Covid-19 procedures and guidance.*

*Several e-learning programmes were developed to support both internal and external frontline provision as well as the redeployment of workers including 'An introduction to Social Care & Personal Care' and 'Infection Prevention & Control'.*

*Members were extremely encouraged to note that the learning and development team has received positive feedback from internal and external providers on the support Ceredigion Council has provided to the sector over this challenging period.*

*It was agreed that Members would be kept informed of any future progress.*

At the same meeting a draft Non-Domestic Rates Policy Framework for Mandatory, Discretionary and Hardship Rate Relief report was considered prior to making a recommendation to Cabinet.

## **OUTCOME AND/OR IMPACT**

*In November 2018 Wales Audit Office (following the 2017/2018 Non-Domestic Rates Final Contributions audit) issued a qualification letter due to the Discretionary Rate Relief Policy last being updated in September 2007. Members agreed that the revised policy is now more detailed and provides clarity and transparency with the decision making process. Following discussion, Committee Members agreed to recommend that Cabinet:*

- *Approve the draft Non-Domestic Rates Policy Framework for Mandatory, Discretionary and Hardship Rate Relief.*

At the same meeting, Members received a report on the impact on the Council I.T. Services including Clic Customer Services during the pandemic.

## **OUTCOME AND/OR IMPACT**

*Both ICT and Customer Services have maintained a full service with the majority of staff working from home. Areas of work are listed below:*

### COVID Specific Work

- New VPN
- Track and Trace
- Emergency Childcare administration
- National Lockdown Business grants 2363 – £28,415,275
- Freelancer Grants
- Firebreak – currently 1070 applications for £2,844,500
- Carer Cards
- Free School Meals Voucher applications
- Supporting Sheilding



*Committee Members congratulated the team for their valued contribution during the previous 9 months since the pandemic began and particularly their important role in supporting departments and the wider community.*

## **OUTCOME AND/OR IMPACT**

*During 2019/2020, three Task and Finish Groups were established to consider key work areas of the service, particularly the ones that had not been examined for a period of time. Members agreed that the Authorities Estate was a valuable asset and therefore any examples of good practice or areas requiring improvement would be sought with recommendations to Cabinet when the work was completed.*

***Due to the pandemic, this area of work had to be put on hold. At the time of writing this report, aspects of this work has been resumed and conclusions will be included in the 2021/2022 Annual Report.***

The agreed Task and Finish Group titles and purpose/areas considered were:

### 1. Transactions:

- To consider current arrangements of the service in terms of maximising income from sales and lease agreement; and;
- To consider current arrangements when acquiring land or buildings, and to consider the robustness of process(es).
  - Asset Disposal (land and buildings)

- Corporate Estate
- Acquisitions

### **OUTCOME AND/OR IMPACT**

*The Task and Finish groups collectively have made a total of 23 proposals suggestions/recommendations to date with many already being accepted and implemented by the Cabinet Member and Officer following the Task and Finish Group meetings. An update report will be presented to Cabinet in due course when normal services are resumed following the coronavirus pandemic.*

*The Resources, County Farms and New Demands Group as mentioned requires further work to be undertaken, particularly in relation to County Farms once Covid-19 measures are sufficiently relaxed.*

Digital Connectivity was also reported to the Committee and Members received information pertaining to initiatives and projects that were being undertaken to support the levels of digital connectivity across the County.

### **OUTCOME AND/OR IMPACT**

*Members agreed that following the discussion they better understood the work progressed by the Council in improving Digital Connectivity across the County. It was agreed that further reports would be presented at future meetings.*

On the 19<sup>th</sup> February 2021, Members received a draft budget report for 2021/22 period as follows:

- To consider the budget being recommended by Cabinet for 2021/2022;
- To consider the Cost Reduction/Budget Savings Proposals 2021/2022; and;
- To consider proposed changes to the Council's Fees and Charges 2021/2022.

### **OUTCOME AND/OR IMPACT**

*Members raised many comments/concerns which were answered by Executive Members or/and Officers. Following a lengthy discussion, a recommendation made to Cabinet as follows:*

- *Committee Members recommended 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 recommended that the Leader of the Council and the Cabinet gave further consideration to the allocation of any possible increase in the RSG.*

*This was agreed and noted by the Executive during the Cabinet meeting on the 23<sup>rd</sup> February 2021.*

## Healthier Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee

The Healthier Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee met on three separate occasions during 2020/2021.



### Key Issues considered

The Corporate Lead Officer for Porth Cynnal Specialist Services regularly attends Committee meetings to present the quarterly Independent Reviewing Service Performance Management Reports which included national and local standards, and targets used to measure outcomes for looked after children and care leavers. The Independent Reviewing Officer has regard as to whether the child/young person's human rights being breached in any way and, if so, considers a referral to CAFCASS Cymru.

### **OUTCOME AND/OR IMPACT**

*The importance of the Independent Reviewing Service was recognised and Members were pleased to receive assurance that the needs of Looked After Children were met and are continuously improved. Members congratulated the service' staff and expressed their gratitude for their commitment and hard work.*

The Corporate Lead Officer for Porth Cynnal Specialist Services presented the Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) report following an inspection by Care Inspectorate Wales and Healthcare Inspectorate Wales (HIW) of Ceredigion County Council and Hywel Dda University Health Board in relation to Early Support, Care and Support and Transition for Disabled Children.

### **OUTCOME AND/OR IMPACT**

*The report identifies a number of strengths within the service and recognises the ongoing transformation work to address the areas for improvement included in the report. An action plan was developed and approved by Leadership Group to build on strengths and ensure that areas for improvements are given the necessary action.*

*The improvement themes are grouped as follows:*

1. *Quality of Assessment, Care Planning and Reporting;*
2. *Commissioning and Service Delivery; and;*
3. *Management Oversight: Strengthening Quality Assurance functions.*

*Progress of the Action Plan would be consistently evaluated through a quality assurance process at Manager and Team meetings and by a Monitoring Group which includes representations from across Porth Ceredigion and other relevant Corporate Officers and the Health Board.*

*The Committee agreed to recommend in a report to Cabinet on the 2<sup>nd</sup> December 2020 the following:*

- *Approve the action plan; subject to consideration of the following:*
  - *the report highlights high level strengths and weaknesses. There is a focus on the weaknesses and remediation actions. Committee Members recommend that the action plan also places emphasis on the identified strengths for further improvement;*
  - *the current Covid-19 crisis needs to be reflected in the timescale set out in the action plan. Concerns were raised as to whether the identified timescales are achievable given the current situation;*
  - *page 7 of the report, point 1.1, identifies resource concerns. This raised concern with Committee Members who request a further report on this matter to include information on financial and staff resources; and;*
  - *that a progress report on the Action Plan is presented to the Committee in 6 months.*

The Corporate Manager, Porth Cymorth Cynnar presented a report on the achievements of the Ceredigion Carers Unit and progress against their agreed targets and objectives during the year 2019/2020.



The report notes that Ceredigion County Council remain committed to providing the best possible outcomes-focused service to enhance the lives of Carers, and to continuously improve support, services and recognition of Carers in Ceredigion. The Act provides a definition of a Carer as “a person who provides or intends to provide care for an adult or disabled child”. This removed the requirement that carers must be providing “a substantial amount of care on a regular basis”.

The Corporate Manager then presented a report on 2019/2020 reflecting the fourth year of the Welsh Government’s transition phase between the Carers Information and Consultation Strategies (Wales) Measure 2010 and the Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014.

## **OUTCOME AND/OR IMPACT**

*In Welsh Government's budget letter dated 14<sup>th</sup> March 2018, they set out their expectation that Health, Local Authorities and the Third Sector would work in partnership to support carers under the Act by:*

- *Supporting life alongside caring – providing opportunities for carers to have reasonable breaks from their caring role to enable them to maintain capacity to care, and to have a life beyond caring;*
- *Identifying and recognising carers – improving Carers recognition of their role and ensuring they can access the right support; and;*
- *Providing information, advice and assistance – providing appropriate advice where and when Carers need it.*

*The West Wales Care Partnership accepted the report and in line with the Welsh Government reporting directive, the presented document was submitted and accepted by Welsh Government.*

*The Chairman thanked the Corporate Manager and the Carers' team for their continued excellent work. Following consideration, the Committee agreed to note the 2018-19 Ceredigion County Council Carers Unit Annual report for Social Services.*

On the 18<sup>th</sup> February 2021, Members received a draft budget report for 2021/22 as follows:

- To consider the budget being recommended by Cabinet for 2021/2022;
- To consider the Cost Reduction/Budget Savings Proposals 2021/2022; and;
- To consider proposed changes to the Council's Fees and Charges 2021/2022.

## **OUTCOME AND/OR IMPACT**

*Following consideration, Members agreed to recommend that Cabinet:*

1. **APPROVE** *the relevant service area budgets within the Committee's remit. Committee Members were presented with two saving options to consider for the Policy, Performance and Public Protection Service. The majority of Committee Members agreed to recommend that Cabinet:*
  - *Approve option b) to reduce the community wardens from 2 FTE staff to 1.6 FTE.*
2. **APPROVE** *the proposed Fees and Charges as outlined in Enclosure C, Appendix 1 of the agenda papers, (pages 1-14 of 51) subject to consideration of the following recommendation:*
  - *That the proposed fees listed on page 4 in relation to Dog Breeding Establishments are all subject to a 6% increase, rather than the proposed percentage increases which range from 4.9% to 5.1%.*
3. **APPROVE** *the relevant Capital schemes in the proposed Capital Programme.*

*Cabinet accepted recommendation number 1, declined 2 and accepted recommendation 3.*

The Corporate Lead Officer, Policy, Performance and Public Protection provided the background to a report relating to amendments to the Smoke-Free Premises (Wales) Regulations 2007 to introduce additional requirements relating to the introduction of new outdoor smoke free areas in the Smoke-free Premises and Vehicles (Wales)



Regulations 2020. Officers within Public Protection require authorisation in order to enforce legislation on behalf of the Authority.



### **OUTCOME AND/OR IMPACT**

*Members discussed the information at length and points raised included:*

- 1. A need to include a ban on vaping in non-smoking areas. It was noted that although this is not currently included in the regulations, the Committee may recommend imposing a ban on vaping on Council premises and land however the Council would have no enforcement powers in relation to vaping. It was noted that other Welsh Authorities have not yet placed a ban on vaping but Ceredigion could go ahead if it is approved.*
- 2. Concerns were raised in relation to bus drivers smoking in car parks whilst waiting for pupils to board their buses. Clarity would be required as to whether bus parking bays are on school property and therefore would be required to refrain from smoking.*
- 3. It was noted that signage has been purchased for display at Ceredigion County Council owned premises.*
- 4. A Council workshop was proposed as the new legislation affects all wards.*
- 5. Some Members noted that policing the ban would be difficult. However, it was noted that compliance has been positive since the legislation on no smoking came into being. It was noted that there are no extra resources to implement the new legislation.*

*Committee members were required:*

- To consider the content and implications of the report, and recommend that steps are taken to ensure all Local Authority smoke-free settings comply with the new legal requirements;*
- That the additional enforcement requirements on the Public Protection service re noted; and;*
- To recommend the inclusion of e-cigarettes as part of the ban on smoking in certain (or all) smoke-free settings under the responsibility of the Local Authority; and to further recommend necessary changes to the Constitution to reflect the implementation of the Smoke-free Premises and Vehicles (Wales) Regulations 2020.*

*The Committee accepted these recommendations with a suggestion that Full Council should consider the following:*

- *That any displayed smoke-free signage should provide a clear message that it includes all types of smoking, including vaping;*
- *Clear guidance should be provided to Community and Town Councils and outside bodies who lease or use Council owned property and/or land;*
- *That the Authority extend the smoking rules on all Council sites to include vaping to promote public wellbeing and to discourage young people from smoking (Concern was raised that vaping may have a pleasant odour which could attract young people); and;*
- *That as an Authority we need to be proactive when considering such policies to lead by example.*

*Following a Full Council vote, it was **RESOLVED:***

*1) to note the content and implications of the report and ensure that all Local Authority smoke-free settings comply with the new legal requirements.*

*2) to make a policy decision to include e-cigarettes as part of the ban on smoking in all smoke-free settings under the responsibility of the Local Authority; and;*

*3) to delegate duties to the Corporate Lead Officer for Policy, Performance and Public Protection to authorise Public Protection officers to undertake appropriate enforcement of the Smoke-free Premises and Vehicles (Wales) Regulations 2020*



The Mid Wales Joint Health and Social Care Joint Scrutiny Group established continues to scrutinise the Mid Wales Joint Health and Social Care Board, previously the Mid Wales Healthcare Collaborative. In light of the Covid-19 pandemic meetings were cancelled during this reporting period.

Meetings are normally held on the afternoon following each meeting of the Board meetings and will re-commence in September 2021 which will be reported in the next reporting period. The Chair, County Director and Programme Manager, and Lead Directors attended those meetings. This is a Joint Scrutiny Working Group comprising Local Authority Members from Gwynedd County Council and Ceredigion County Council and previously Powys County Council. Powys, however, withdrew its Membership at the end of 2019.

### **OUTCOME AND/OR IMPACT**

*This provides an opportunity to examine various functions, to scrutinise decisions taken, and to consider whether service improvements can be put in place and to make recommendations to this effect. The Working Group met on four occasions during this reporting period.*

Lisa Evans

Standards and Scrutiny Officer

Dwynwen Jones

Overview and Scrutiny Officer