

**Minutes of the Meeting of OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY CO-ORDINATING COMMITTEE  
held virtually via Zoom on Wednesday, 1 December 2021**

**PRESENT;** Councillor Rowland Rees-Evans (Chairman), Councillors Elaine Evans (Vice-Chair), Bryan Davies, Marc Davies, Lyndon Lloyd MBE, Dan Potter, Mark Strong and Ivor Williams

**Also in attendance:** Councillors Ellen ap Gwynn, (Leader of the Council), Councillors Rhodri Evans, Gareth Lloyd, Alun Williams, Catrin Miles. Councillor Ceredig Davies (non-Committee Member)

**Officers in attendance:** Michael Smith, Engagement and Equalities Officer, Diana Davies, Corporate Manager, Partnerships and Performance, Cathryn Morgan, Public Services Board Manager, Elin Prysor, Monitoring Officer and Corporate Lead Officer, Legal and Governance, Elizabeth Upcott, Team Manager, Adult Protection, Rob Starr, performance and Research Manager, Caitlin Theodorou, Research and Performance Officer, Mari Hopins, Research and Performance Assistant, Lisa Evans, Standards and Scrutiny Officer, Dwynwen Jones, Overview and Scrutiny Officer, Rhidian Jones and Llinos Williams, Translators.

(10.00 am - 12.02 pm)

**37 Apologies**

Councillors Wyn Thomas and Elizabeth Evans (Committee Observer in her role as Audit Committee Chair) apologised for being unable to attend the meeting.

**38 Disclosures of personal interest (including whipping declarations)  
Members are reminded of their personal responsibility to declare any personal and prejudicial interest in respect of matters contained in this agenda in accordance with the provisions of the Local Government Act 2000, the Council's Constitution and the Members Code of Conduct. In addition, Members must declare any prohibited party whip which the Member has been given in relation to the meeting as per the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011**

There were no disclosures of personal or prejudicial interests.

**39 Update on the progress in implementing the Socio-Economic Duty, (SED), of the Equality Act 2010 in the strategic decision making process.**

Michael Smith, Engagement and Equalities Officer, gave an update on the progress in implementing the Socio-Economic Duty (SED) of the Equality Act 2010.

He advised Committee Members that the below mentioned had been completed to raise awareness and to implement the SED through the strategic decision making process.

- The Authority's Integrated Impact Assessment, (IAA), template and guidance has been revised to include the Socio-Economic Duty;
- The Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA) template has been amended to include three questions on the Socio-Economic Duty, which are:
  1. What evidence do you have about socio-economic disadvantage and inequalities of outcome in relation to the proposal? Describe why it will have a positive/negative or negligible impact.
  2. What evidence do you have to support this view?
  3. What action(s) can you take to mitigate any negative impacts or better contribute to positive impacts?
- The IIA Template and Guidance have been updated on Cerinet;
- All Cabinet reports are checked by the Engagement and Equalities Officer on whether IIA completion is required and if so, whether the IIA is of an acceptable standard. Feedback is given to Corporate Lead Officers, (CLOs), via the CLO for Policy, Performance and Public Protection. This includes assessing the SED content of any IIA. Ultimately, the final decision and responsibility for an IIA sits with the relevant CLO;
- All Cabinet reports are checked by the Engagement and Equality Officer on whether an IIA is required, and if so, whether the IIA is of an acceptable standard. Feedback is provided to Corporate Lead Officers, (CLOs), via the CLO for Policy, Performance and Public Protection. This includes assessing the SED content of any IIA. Ultimately, the final decision and responsibility for an IIA sits with the relevant CLO;
- The Corporate Equality Working Group has been briefed and involved in the commencement of the SED and the revision of the IIA process;
- A presentation on the SED was delivered to a Corporate Managers' Workshop on the 28/5/21;
- A Members' Workshop on the SED was delivered on the 13/10/21;
- The Equality E-Learning and Equality Training for Managers Course have been revised to include the SED;
- There is work planned to provide data on socio-economic disadvantage in order to inform the completion of IIAs; and;
- Progress on the SED will be included in the Strategic Equality Plan Annual Monitoring Report 2021-22 and published on the Council Website.

Members were given the opportunity to ask questions which were answered in turn by Officers. A Member raised concern with regards to Poverty throughout the County amongst the elderly and those suffering physically and mentally. The Officer confirmed that Poverty is not classed as a protected characteristic, however, the impact on disability, the elderly etc is considered. The Leader also confirmed that the PSB Poverty Group have recently developed a Hardship Strategy which was presented to the Corporate Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the 14<sup>th</sup> October 2021 and Cabinet on the 2<sup>nd</sup> November 2021.

Following discussion, Members agreed to receive the update on the progress of implementing the SED.

The Chairman thanked Michael Smith for the information and wished him well in his new role.

**40 Report on Covid-19 Gold Command Decisions log**

Elin Prysor attended to present a report on Covid-19 Gold Command Decisions log. The previous reports were presented on 20<sup>th</sup> January 2021 and 16<sup>th</sup> June 2021. The Decision Log for decisions made between 4<sup>th</sup> May 2021 and 31<sup>st</sup> August 2021 were included in this report and had been published on the Council Website.

During discussion, a Member asked why the information provided relates to the period up until August 2021 only? The Officer confirmed that the log is displayed publicly on the Council Website, however, agreed that this should be updated regularly and will ensure that a monthly update is displayed in future.

Following a question regarding temporary delegated powers, it was confirmed that those powers lapsed on the 31 August 2021, however, Gold Command has continued to meet under the Civil Contingencies Act 2004.

Following discussion, Members agreed to note the contents of the Gold Command Covid-19 Leadership Group Meetings Decisions Log so as to monitor the governance for the Councils adapting decision-making arrangements.

The Chairman thanked Elin Prysor for the report.

**41 CYSUR/CWMPAS Combined Local Operational Group Safeguarding Report Qtr 1 2021/22**

Elizabeth Upcott attended the meeting to present the CYSUR/CWMPAS combined Local Operational Group Safeguarding Report, Quarter 1, 2021/2022 outlining a summary of the key points as follows:

- There has been a significant increase in the number of safeguarding reports in comparison with the previous quarter that led to Child Protection Strategy Discussions/Strategy Meetings, 99 in quarter 4 to 116 in quarter 1;  
With the easing of restrictions and schools re-opening there has been a growth in the number of reports received with reporting levels having been suppressed during the lockdown period.
- There were 18 Initial Child Protection Conferences held during this quarter, compared to 9 in the previous quarter, quarter 4.
- The total number of children placed on the Child Protection Register following Initial Conferences were 18 in this quarter, compared to 7 in the previous quarter.
- Police were again the main referring agency in this quarter followed by Education and then Internal Social Services staff. This follows the same pattern in Quarter 4.
- The main concerns that led to the completion of child protection enquiries were allegations of sexual abuse/exploitation (25) and physical abuse (24). This is comparable with Q4 where physical

abuse (17) and sexual abuse (16) were the main categories of abuse reported.

- The initial child protection conferences held during this quarter had doubled from the previous quarter. 94.4% of initial conferences were held within timescales.
- There were a total number of 12 Review Child Protection Conferences held in this quarter. This related to a total of 24 children from 12 families. As an outcome of the review conferences, 7 children remained on the register with 17 children removed from the Child Protection Register. Of the number of children removed from the register, 16 children remained subject to a Child in Need Care and Support Plan.
- In 95% of the conferences held, there was at least one family member, who holds Parental Responsibility present at the conference and in 90% of the conferences held, the children's views were represented.
- The main risk factors to children that were recorded were domestic abuse, parental non-cooperation with the Child Protection Plan, separation, and parental mental health difficulties.
- The number of children on the Child Protection Register was consistent with the previous quarter; however 17 Children were deregistered with a further 18 Children being registered at the Initial Child Protection Conference.

Following a question regarding Staff capacity, it was confirmed that there are currently Staff vacancies, however, all statutory work requirements are being fulfilled and Staff are continuing to work tirelessly in this Service. Partnership Working is key, for example there are Police Liaison Officers dedicated to each School in Ceredigion who are regularly called upon for support.

Concern were raised regarding the increase in Child Protection referrals and the Officer confirmed that even during the lockdown period Social Workers continued essential visits, to those families whereby children are on the Child Protection Register, whilst adhering to the Covid guidelines. A Member advised Committee Members that he is aware of Teachers who visited children's family homes during lockdown to provide the child with homework as a means to monitor those children on the Child Protection Register.

Councillor Alun Williams, Cabinet Member, reiterated that recruitment of Staff is an issue of concern and that Agency Staff are being employed to assist. He also stated that the number of high referrals is also a matter of concern. The Cabinet Member stated that in his opinion the Social Services base budget is too low to fulfil statutory duties. He thanked Officers/Staff for their continued hard work.

Following discussion, Members agreed to note the contents of the report and the levels of activity with the Local Authority so that

governance for the Local Authority activity and its partner agencies are monitored.

It was noted that Safeguarding is identified as a current red risk on the Authority's Risk Register.

The Chairman thanked Elizabeth Upcott for presenting the information and asked that a message be relayed to Staff thanking them for their continuous efforts.

**42 Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report 2020/2021**

Lisa Evans presented the Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report 2020/2021. Members agreed to note its contents prior to being presented to Full Council on the 9<sup>th</sup> December 2021.

**43 Self-evaluation of Scrutiny**

Lisa Evans introduced the Self-evaluation of Scrutiny report. It was agreed at the Democratic Services Committee meeting held on the 23 February 2018, that the Scrutiny Officers would undertake a review of the effectiveness of Overview and Scrutiny in Ceredigion County Council, and that this would be undertaken annually in future.

It was resolved at the Democratic Services Committee meeting held on 27 January 2020 to:

1. Continue to carry out the survey on an annual basis;
2. To reduce the number of questions with an aim to increase participation;
3. To review the format of the report, combining the Welsh and English responses, and translating the document as a whole

A total of 15 responses were received, this is a reduction in comparison to the 25 responses received in 2020, some completed online and some by post. Members' names are not disclosed.

Members were asked to consider the responses received from the scrutiny self-evaluation questionnaire and identify any areas for improvement.

Following discussion, it was agreed to note the responses received.

**44 Ceredigion Public Services Board (PSB) meeting held on the 17th September 2021 and the Draft Assessment of Local Well-Being**

Cathryn Morgan presented the Ceredigion Public Services Board (PSB) meeting minutes held on the 17<sup>th</sup> September 2021.

Rob Starr and Caitlin Theodorou presented the Draft Assessment of Local Well-being. Rob Starr advised Committee Members that the Draft Assessment of Local Well-being had been produced in order to inform the preparation of the Ceredigion Local Well-being Plan 2023-28. The Plan will set out how to improve the Well-being of Ceredigion and its communities over the next 5 years outlining what is important to people and communities

in Ceredigion. The Draft Assessment had been approved by the PSB for consultation and is on track for publishing the final Assessment in March 2022.

Rob Starr and Caitlin Theodorou then outlined the main themes and findings to date which are as follows:

- Digitisation – is reported as a high priority, more so with remote and home working;
- Housing Affordability – is reported as a high priority, more so with increased house prices during the pandemic;
- Poverty (In-Work Poverty and Child Poverty) – Ceredigion has seen the 2<sup>nd</sup> highest increase in child poverty in Wales and this therefore needs close monitoring;
- Changing Population – we have seen a decline in the working age and an increase in the older generation. This could develop to greater complex needs leading to pressure on our Health and Social Care Services;
- Environment – Climate change and protecting the Environment was important especially for children;
- Future Health Needs – Better quality and access to Leisure Services was noted to assist individual's Wellbeing and Mental Health;
- Role of Culture – identified as important although there has been a decline in arts and heritage participation just prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. The results of the engagement, however, evidence that individuals strongly value the role of culture in their lives; and;
- Welsh Language – evidence shows continued increased numbers of Welsh speakers in the County.

Caitlin Theodorou then continued explaining the next steps in this process:

- Consultation Period – 8 weeks (due to commence very soon);
- Consultation to run until January 2022;
- Requesting all to feedback and respond;
- Present Final Assessment to PSB 7<sup>th</sup> March 2022.

In response to Members questions and concerns, in-particular concerns regarding Poverty and Housing, it was confirmed that further investigation needs to be completed in order to finalise the document.

Following discussion, Members agreed the following recommendations:

1. To receive the draft minutes of the Ceredigion PSB meeting held on 17<sup>th</sup> September 2021; and;
2. To receive the draft Assessment of Local Well-being that is currently out for public consultation.

The Chairman thanked Diana, Rob, Caitlin, Mari and the Council Leader for the detailed report.

- 45 To receive a update from the Chairmen of the Overview and Scrutiny Committees and to consider the draft Forward Work Programmes**  
Each Committee Chair provided information in turn regarding their respective Overview and Scrutiny Committees. It was agreed to include Street Scene to the Thriving Communities Overview and Scrutiny Forward Work Plan to discuss pavement access.

- 46 To confirm minutes of the Coordinating meeting held on 15 September 2021 and to consider any matters arising from those minutes**  
The minutes of the Coordinating meeting held on the 15 September 2021 were confirmed as a true record of proceedings.

The Chairman advised the Committee that in relation to minute number 29, page number 2, agenda item: Minutes of the Ceredigion Public Services Board (PSB) meeting held on the 12<sup>th</sup> July 2021 and the Ceredigion Local Well-being Plan Annual Report 2020-2021, that a concern raised by a Member noted in paragraph 2 and 3 of those minutes requested he raised those concerns at the Public Services Board meeting. Councillor Rees-Evans confirmed he had raised those concerns.

- 47 Any other matter that the Chairman decides is for the urgent attention of the Committee**  
There were no matters raised.

Councillor Rowland Rees-Evans, Chair, thanked Committee Members for attending the meeting and to Officers and Cabinet Members for presenting the information. He thanked all officers involved for ensuring the smooth running of the meeting.

**Confirmed at the Meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee held on 10 February 2022**

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

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