

Minutes of the Meeting of CORPORATE RESOURCES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

held Hybrid - Neuadd Cyngor Ceredigion, Penmorfa, Aberaeron / remotely via video conference on Monday, 12 June 2023

PRESENT; Councillor Rhodri Evans (Chair) Councillors Euros Davies, Ifan Davies, Endaf Edwards, Elaine Evans, Eryl Evans, Paul Hinge, Hugh R M Hughes, Ann Bowen Morgan, Ceris Jones

Also in attendance: Councillor Clive Davies and Matthew Vaux (Cabinet Members) together with Councillor Amanda Edwards and Elizabeth Evans

Officers in attendance: Mr Arwyn Davies, Corporate Manager – Growth and Enterprise, Mr Alun Williams- Corporate Lead Officer, Policy & Performance, Mrs Diana Davies, Corporate Manger- Partnerships & Performance, Ms Cathryn Morgan, Equalities and Inclusion Manager, Mrs Dwynwen Jones- Scrutiny Support Officer, Mrs Nia Jones, Corporate Manager- Democratic Services and Mrs Dana Jones, Democratic and Services Officer

(10:00am-12:30pm)

1 Apologies

Councillor Caryl Roberts and Carl Worrall apologised for their inability to attend the meeting.

The Chairman and all Members thanked former Councillor Geraint Hughes for all his work during his time on the committee and wished him well in the future.

2 Disclosures of personal interest (including whipping declarations)

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

None.

3 Elect a temporary vice-Chair (until the end of July 2023)

It was AGREED that Councillor Elaine Evans be elected as vice-chair until end of July 2023.

4 Engagement and Participation Policy Annual Report 2022-2023

The Ceredigion Engagement and Participation Policy 'Talking, Listening and Working Together' was approved by Cabinet on 04/10/2022 and published on 18/10/2022. This was the first Annual Report that outlines our progress in delivering the Policy.

The report provides an update on the progress of the Action Plan contained within the Policy, along with the Engagement Methods utilised by the Council, some examples of Continuous Engagement and a summary of the Engagement, Consultation and 'Inform' exercises undertaken during 2022-23.

At the end of the report a conclusion section has been included to assess the improvements made over the past year and to identify where further progress is required in moving forward.

Following question from the floor, it was AGREED to the content of the Engagement and Participation Policy Annual Report 2022-2023 subject:-
(i) in relation to Aim 2: To ensure that we engage with the people of Ceredigion in the best way, Action: To improve the way that we feedback to those who have participated in our engagement exercises, Progress: A consistent method was currently being developed and would be rolled out across all Council services during 2023-2024, Responsibility: All Corporate Managers - RAG status was Red no progress made,
(ii) that all engagement exercises participants should receive the outcome results, and
(iii) that a 6-month monitoring update report was presented to the Corporate Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee at its December meeting

5 Digital Connectivity Update

Consideration was given to the Digital Connectivity Update. The report had been presented in order to provide an overview of the initiatives and projects that Ceredigion County Council were currently undertaking to support the levels of digital connectivity across the County.

An update was provided on Broadband to include Fibre Projects, Project Gigabit, Welsh Government Prior Information Notice (PIN) and Mobile Coverage to include Shared Rural Network, Mid Wales Growth Deal Projects.

Access to enhanced and reliable digital connectivity, and accelerating its deployment was fundamental to transforming the Ceredigion economy and enabling improvements in wellbeing. Digital technologies were transforming communications, services, learning and business opportunities at an ever-increasing pace. New digital technology such as the LoRaWAN network and access to data analytics have the potential to open new businesses as well as improving the lives of our communities.

While Ceredigion had seen improvements in digital infrastructure over the past 12 months and some areas experience some of the quickest broadband speeds in the UK, there were areas of the County that still fall below the levels of other areas of Wales and the UK for superfast broadband and mobile

10 connectivity. As previously stated, the past 2 - 3 years had seen significant efforts being put into demand stimulation exercises and awareness raising exercises to demonstrate the commercial opportunities

that were available to suppliers, with this work now coming to fruition through suppliers

starting to deploy the infrastructure and making connections, which would see an increase in connectivity and access to fibre broadband.

The Council was committed to developments within this sector and action was being taken, with support and funding available through multiple streams. It was hoped that through technologies such as LoRaWAN and initiatives such as the SMART Towns project that Ceredigion would be seen as a place for innovation and would attract businesses and suppliers to the region to further support the economy and where appropriate for Ceredigion to be seen as a testbed to explore the advantages available through increased use of digital technology.

Following discussion, Members agreed it would be beneficial to invite representatives from the Service Providers to a Full Council meeting/workshop in the future and recommend that this was considered by Cabinet.

6 Update on SMART Towns

A Smart Town, as defined by the Welsh Government as an urban area that uses different types of electronic methods and sensors to collect data. Insights gained from that data were used to manage assets, resources, and services efficiently; in return, that data was used to improve operations and future prosperity across the town. It was reported that seven Towns in Ceredigion were taking steps to increase the use of technology to support the development and growth of the towns. The increased use of technology would enable Town Councils and the County Council to access data and analytics which would support future planning and more efficient business operating and growth, as well as the possibility of providing a greater visitor experience. The need to exploit technology had been raised as a key need through the Place Making plan development work that has been undertaken across six of Ceredigion's towns over the past year (Aberystwyth, Aberaeron, Tregaron, Lampeter, Llandysul and Cardigan).

It was viewed that this technology would support businesses and positively benefit regeneration. This would enable businesses to plan projects which lead to economic growth as well as helping them make the best use of digital technology. This includes utilising data to help businesses better understand their customer base and trends which would support businesses in their future planning and marketing activities.

It was reported that Ceredigion Wi-Fi Towns support programme was currently that in collaboration with Powys County Council, Ceredigion County Council were successful in receiving funding to progress a project to enable 'SMART Towns' in Ceredigion. The project had involved the installation of wi-fi access points in Aberaeron, Llandysul, Lampeter, New Quay and Tregaron, with Aberystwyth and Cardigan already having systems in place.

As well as providing 'Town wi-fi' across each of the Towns, the equipment would provide the ability to collect anonymised data upon footfall, space usage and dwell time, and would enable Town Councils and the County

Council to conduct before and after analysis, helping towns identify which approaches were best during the post Covid recovery.

As well as Town centre analysis the project would provide the ability to promote local businesses through targeted marketing campaigns and through a 'Town Centre App', replicating much of the positive work that has been carried out in Cardigan around this. As part of this project Town Councils and businesses would be provided with the following support to ensure its success

- Digital resources upon how to effectively make use of the equipment for Town Councils and businesses and would be made available online.
- The identification of a 'SMART Town Champion' would ensure the data from the system was collated and shared regularly with relevant businesses in each town.
- The provision of a digital marketing toolkit.
- Businesses and Towns would be assisted through the Welsh Government initiative with Town Councils currently engaging with the project.
- Individual support to businesses to aid in the effective use of data and digital technologies which would act as case studies to motivate others.
- To date the equipment had been installed and was operational in Tregaron, Llandysul and NewQuay, with Aberaeron and Lampeter systems nearing completion and expected to be 'live' by the end of June 2023.
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Town Wi-Fi equipment was already installed in Cardigan and Aberystwyth, and further enhancements to the service have been made in those towns using Cynnal y Cardi funding recently. This means that 7 towns in Ceredigion would have access to Town Wi-Fi equipment.

LoRaWAN (Long Range Wide Area Network) was a Low Power Wide Area Network (LPWAN) made for the Internet of Things (IoT). It was designed to allow low-powered devices and sensors to communicate with Internet-connected applications over long-range wireless connections. These sensors or devices require very low power consumption and work off batteries or energy harvesting devices (typically solar), which means that they could be in place in remote areas for up to five years without the need to replace them.

The use of LoRaWAN could have applications in transportation, agriculture, tourism, environmental management, social care and housing. Ceredigion County Council now had one of the most extensive networks across any other Local Authority in Wales and the first Local Authority to have coverage across much of the County. As well as the Council having access, the network would also be available and accessible to all businesses, organisations and residents, with the freedom for the network to be used in the manner in which they feel most effective.

Allowing public usage of gateways ensures that the platform would grow more readily and as a popular growing platform, it means more people would develop sensors for LoRaWAN, creating more hardware and more software in the marketplace. As the network of gateways increases, it also adds

capacity and resilience where areas may be covered by multiple gateways. This means that if a gateway fails, connectivity would be maintained via another gateway in range. Through the provision of free access to the Ceredigion LoRaWAN network and collaboration between internal Council departments, business owners and other local organisations such as Aberystwyth University and Farming Connect, they were offering developers, adopters, and endusers the opportunity to trial and deploy solutions to address a wide range of challenges that were facing local people, businesses and institutions.

As part of the Welsh Governments ambitions to exploit the use of LoRaWAN technologies across Wales, Ceredigion County Council had been successful in receiving a significant amount of equipment, including LoRaWAN gateways and relevant sensors, to further extend the coverage and build resilience of the existing network as well enabling the development of use cases by the Council. These use cases would be shared and highlighted with the aim to inspire businesses and other organisation to make use of the LoRaWAN network to bring about cost savings and improved efficiencies. The possible uses of sensors provided by Welsh Government was currently being explored by various Council services to decide upon their effective use and how they can be deployed. Collaborations with public sector bodies were currently being established to enable access to gateways which these organisations can make use of to develop their own projects and use cases. By doing so it would be possible to diversify the use of the network that the Council had put in place and drive innovation.

As the Wi-Fi and LoRaWAN networks were in place across the County, this placed Ceredigion in a positive place to enable businesses and public services to be able to exploit its full potential. Further work needs to be done, and was planned, to enable the exploitation of the Wi-Fi and LoRaWAN networks by all stakeholders. The Cynnal y Cardi programme had supported the development of promotional material to raise awareness of the availability of Town Wi-Fi across all 7 towns, including the production of Banners, Posters / window sticker, Lampost banners, Table tents, Bags and pens. A logo / graphic had been produced for use on all promotional materials.

Details on the Cardigan Pilot and Demonstrating use cases at the National Eisteddfod was also provided.

Future work in the development of SMART towns in Ceredigion would be focused on achieving further exploitation of the opportunities provided, and the achievement of real benefits for businesses and other stakeholders through:

- Raising awareness of the opportunity provided by, and availability of, the County-wide Wi-Fi and LoRaWAN network. Stakeholders were increasingly aware through the Placemaking development work, and local stakeholders were actively involved in understanding the opportunities provided and sharing these more widely.
- Sharing good practice and use-cases – build on the pilot project and report

produced for Cardigan town, to ensure that the lessons and opportunities were shared across all towns in Ceredigion.

• Further revenue resource – we are aware that the exploitation work can be accelerated where there was dedicated resource to enable and promote the work. A new digital officer for Ceredigion would be appointed, whose role would include supporting stakeholders to do this. The work would be supported by UKSPF-funded activity, linked to the emerging placemaking plans for the towns.

Following question from the floor it was AGREED:

(i) to note the current position;

(ii) that Clerks of Town and Community Councils were informed of the potential benefits of Wi-Fi and LoRaWAN networks and its app;

(iii) that further discussion be held with the Chair and Officers in relation to the request of the Committee that two/three businesses in the Cardigan area be invited to the meeting to inform Members of the benefits of the app/statistics provided to their business via the Wi-fi/LoRaWAN networks, or alternatively Members visit several businesses in Cardigan to seek this information; and

(iv) that Mr Peter Williams, Digital Infrastructure team at Welsh Government be invited to the December meeting to provide an update on their current work in Ceredigion

7 Forward Work Programme

It was AGREED to note the Forward Work Programme subject to the request previously agreed by Members at the Committee in relation to:-

(i) Two to three businesses users the Wifi/ and LoRaWAN networks in Cardigan be invited to the December meeting or alternatively Members visit Cardigan businesses to seek the benefits of scheme/app;

(ii) that Mr Peter Williams, Digital Infrastructure team at Welsh Government be invited to the December meeting to provide an update on their current work in Ceredigion;

(iii) that a six-month monitoring report on the Engagement and Participation Policy Annual Report 2022-2023 be presented at the December meeting; and

(iv) that work was ongoing on presenting a report on the County Farms following recent visits by Members

8 To confirm minutes of the previous meeting and to consider any matters arising from those Minutes.

It was agreed to confirm the minutes of the meeting of the previous meeting as a true record.

Confirmed at the Meeting of the Corporate Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 19 July 2023

Chairman: _____

Date: _____