

Minutes of the Meeting of the Thriving Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee held at the Council Chamber, Neuadd Cyngor Ceredigion, Penmorfa, Aberaeron and remotely on Monday, 18 March 2024

Present: Councillor Gwyn Wigley Evans (Chairman), Councillors Marc Davies (Vice-Chair), Shelley Childs, Gethin Davies, Meirion Davies, Rhodri Davies, Rhodri Evans, Chris James, Maldwyn Lewis, Sian Maehrlein, Ann Bowen Morgan, John Roberts & Carl Worrall.

Also in attendance: Councillors Euros Davies, Raymond Evans, Wyn Evans, Hugh Hughes & Gareth Lloyd.

Cabinet Members present: Councillor Keith Henson.

Officers in attendance: Rhodri Llwyd, Corporate Lead Officer, Highways and Environmental Services; Arwyn Davies, Corporate Manager, Growth and Enterprise; Lisa Evans, Standards and Scrutiny Officer and Neris Morgans, Democratic Services Officer.

(10.00am- 12.37pm)

1 Apologies

Councillor Clive Davies, Cabinet Member for Economy and Regeneration apologised for his inability to attend the meeting.

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.

Councillors Chris James and Maldwyn Lewis declared a personal and prejudicial interest in item 4 and withdrew from the meeting.

3 Waste Collection Service

Councillor Keith Henson (Cabinet Member for Highways and Environmental Services and Carbon Management) provided an overview of the meeting held on 21 March 2023, including the key matters explored, the action points from the discussion and progress to date.

Since the meeting on 21 March 2023, further information evidenced and supported not only the improved performance of the service from a waste collection perspective in the last 9 months but also detailed the excellent ongoing performance of the service on a national basis through objective analysis of data. An overview of the data published by the Welsh Government (WG) on the reuse and composting of municipal waste for 2022-23 was provided and from the Welsh Local Government's Annual Waste Finance Data Report and Draft Summary Report. At a Local Authority (LA) level, the service had established a set of performance measures to quantify

and monitor the level of service it provided to residents with targets to ensure that in excess of 90% of routes were provided on the scheduled day of collection, and 95% provided in the scheduled week of collection.

Rhodri Llwyd, Corporate Lead Officer, Highways and Environmental Services provided a presentation to the Committee outlining the following:

- Disruption 22-23
- Key Matters to Explore
- Potential Future Options
- Actions
- Current Position (Recycling Performance, CCC 23/24 Recycling Figures & WLGA Reports 21/22)
- Other points to note

Members were provided with the opportunity to ask questions which were answered by Rhodri Llwyd and Councillor Keith Henson. The main points raised were as follows:

- In relation to the Review of Household Waste Sites (HWS), options were being explored and details would be shared with Members accordingly. It was noted that CCC had a greater provision of HWS per head than any other LA across Wales. Despite concerns that the closure of one of the HWS would result in increased fly-tipping, evidence from other LAs suggested that this was not the case.
- The decrease in recycling rates in 23/24 from 75.91% in quarter 1 to 70.47% in quarter 3 was due to a reduction in the recycling of highway sweeping in quarter 3. CCC currently had 3 highway sweepers and was on the programme to be changed.
- In terms of the review of operational staff contracts, a meeting had been arranged with the People and Organisation service to discuss the way forward and whether further discussions were required.
- Following the approval of the 3 black bags limit of residual waste per residential household per 3 weekly collections, concerns were raised with the practicality and the impact of this decision on residents (e.g., HMOs). Discussions were ongoing around the changes and lessons would be learned from other LAs across Wales who already had implemented this. A Communication Strategy would be developed to share information with Elected Members and the public.
- Educating the public on the importance of recycling was deemed key, as data suggested that over 50% of waste in black bags was either food or could be recycled. In addition, it was more cost-effective to recycle waste and food in comparison to the disposal of residual waste.
- Members reported that bringing collections forward to a Saturday before a Bank Holiday Monday was very effective and the Service should be praised for this. Staff costs on a Saturday and on a Bank Holiday both included overtime payments.
- The current fleet was around 5 years old, and the intention was to change it in the next 2-3 years. The needs of the new fleet would depend on the Waste Collection Strategy and consideration would be given to electric/hydrogen vehicles; however, this change would be subject to funding.

- Digital solutions were being explored to help identify commercial waste producers. From 6 April 2024, businesses will be required by law to sort their waste for recycling. National Resources Wales (NRW) had recently employed 8 officers across Wales to monitor and take enforcement where necessary and Officers from CCC and NRW would be working together to educate businesses of the changes.
- Clarification was received that the LA's recycling waste was taken to a Material Recovery Facility in Northern Ireland, whilst the Council's residual waste was taken to 'Energy from Waste' facilities within Wales and England.
- The service and particularly the front-line teams were praised for their work in challenging circumstances such as during the recent high level of staff absence which was being addressed and problems with the fleet.

Rhodri Llwyd on behalf of the Waste Collection Service thanked the Committee Members for their support and it was evident that communication and working together were key, to ensure that the best service was provided to the residents of Ceredigion. Members were encouraged to report any waste collection issues to CLIC.

Councillor Keith Henson thanked all present for an interesting discussion which highlighted the importance and the work of a service that had been impacted by budget cuts over the years.

It was **AGREED** to note the report and the excellent service that continued to be provided and the progress being made against the previously agreed actions.

4 The availability of grants for organisations and businesses in Ceredigion

Arwyn Davies, Corporate Manager, Growth and Enterprise explained that a range of grants were made available to organisations and businesses in Ceredigion for various purposes, primarily to support their growth, innovation, and contribution to the economy. Some of the common reasons why businesses received grants from the public sector were provided. Overall, grants served to incentivise business growth, innovation, and socio-economic development by providing financial assistance and support to deserving businesses. Grants were also made available for community organisations to support the development of initiatives that supported the development of facilities and activities in those communities.

Information contained in the report was only a representation of some of the support funding that was currently available to businesses and organisations in Ceredigion and was not meant to be an exhaustive list. Governments or Government bodies launched funding programmes at various points to support Government priorities and policies, so the advice would always be to use advisors and search widely for support that may be available at any one time.

An overview of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) that had enabled the establishment of two grant schemes (The Cynnal y Cardi Community Development and Support Fund and The Cynnal y Cardi Supporting Local Business Fund) was provided. It was noted that although the grants were small in sum at times, they gave confidence to those who had been successful in their bid and could also attract private investment. Recent data suggested that more new businesses had opened in Ceredigion compared to those that had closed over the past 2-3 years. Several factors contributed to this, including funding support.

Members were provided with the opportunity to ask questions which were answered by Arwyn Davies. The main points raised were as follows:

- Cynnal y Cardi UKSPF 2022-25 was a 3-year programme, and the £12m allocated to Ceredigion had been shared between many businesses and organisations. Several processes were involved to deliver the work within this period, including setting up the programmes, approving applications and processing the claims once the work had been completed.
- The Partnership had agreed to close the Cynnal y Cardi UKSPF 2022-25 grants application window on 25 March 2024 due to the high number of applications and to allow for the current applications to be assessed. Re-opening of grant funding opportunities depended on the suitability of the applications. The same applied to Community grants.
- Grants to support businesses and organisations were considered vital, and it was positive that there had been a high level of interest within the county, which reflected the need for support. Members encouraged the service to ensure no funding allocated to the LA went unused.
- A Panel assessed the Cynnal y Cardi applications and each application was scored independently. Many factors including the business plan were considered and how it aligned with the local economic strategy. If a business had narrowly missed the threshold, feedback was provided and where time and funding allowed, there was a potential to re-apply.
- Plans to expand the provision at Food Centre Wales in Horeb were being developed as part of the Growing Mid Wales Programme.
- Historically, Wales has not had much success in attracting innovative-based grants, however, the Chancellor announced during the recent Spring Budget that a sum of £5m through UK Research Innovation (UKRI) had been allocated to an Agri-food Launchpad across Mid and North Wales. This announcement followed an unsuccessful bid by CCC on behalf of the regions for funding for the Agri-tech sector. The development would hopefully provide a platform for innovation and place the region in an improved position to attract future grants and investments. One of the main tasks for CCC was to ensure that as much of the £5m was invested in Ceredigion.

Arwyn Davies provided an overview of the Government-backed loans available via the Development Bank for Wales and the British Business Bank – Investment Fund for Wales. Increasingly, Governments tended to favour the use of recyclable money in the form of loans, or a mix of grant and recyclable funding, to make existing funds more sustainable in the future.

It was noted that the challenges for businesses and organisations in rural areas were unique, and therefore, the availability of grants was vital to encourage economic growth. An assessment of the impact on Ceredigion's economy and the need for this support would be undertaken and would be presented to stakeholders including WG and UK Government.

The Chair thanked Arwyn Davies for an informative report and encouraged him to return with an update in a position to do so.

It was **AGREED** to note the report.

5 To confirm the Minutes of the previous Meeting and to consider any matters arising from those Minutes

It was **AGREED** to confirm the minutes of the meeting held on 9 February 2024.

Matters arising: Councillor Carl Worrall explained that he had been present at the previous meeting, although his name was not included in the minutes.

6 To consider the Overview and Scrutiny Forward Work Programme

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

- Highways Asset Plan (June or July 2024)
- Quarterly Revenue Report/ Budget monitoring documents (June 2024)
- Report on the impact of grants and support on Ceredigion's businesses and organisations (end of 2024)
- Update on Ceredigion County Council's highways
- Update on the impact of the introduction of the 20mph speed limits

The Chair explained that this was his last meeting as the Committee's Chair. He thanked all for their contribution over the past two years.

Confirmed at the Meeting of the Thriving Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 18 June 2024

Chairman: _____

Date: _____