

**Minutes of the Meeting of OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY CO-ORDINATING COMMITTEE
held at the Hybrid - Neuadd Cyngor Ceredigion, Penmorfa, Aberaeron / remotely via
video conference on Thursday, 16 January 2025**

PRESENT: Councillor Wyn Evans (Chairman), Councillors Keith Evans, Marc Davies, Gwyn Wigley Evans, Chris James, Elaine Evans, Rhodri Evans, Amanda Edwards.

OFFICERS PRESENT: Barry Rees, Corporate Director, Lowri Edwards, Corporate Lead Officer, Democratic Services, Nia Jones, Corporate Manager, Democratic Services, Alun Williams, Corporate Lead Officer, Policy, Performance and Public Protection, Elin Pryor, Corporate Lead Officer Legal and Governance and Monitoring Officer, Diana Davies, Corporate Manager, Elizabeth Upcott, Corporate Safeguarding and Quality Assurance Manager, Rob Starr, Performance and Research Manager, Timothy Bray, Partnerships and Civil Contingencies Manager, Lisa Evans, Standards and Scrutiny Officer, Dwynwen Jones, Overview and Scrutiny Officer and Translators.

ALSO PRESENT:

Cabinet Members: The Leader of the Council, Councillor Bryan Davies and Councillor Alun Williams, Deputy Leader. Councillors Keith Henson and Catrin M S Davies.

Councillors Gareth Lloyd and Euros Davies.

(10am – 12:55pm)

33 Welcome and Apologies

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

1. Councillor Ceris Jones and Caryl Roberts apologised for their inability to attend the meeting.
2. Councillor Mathew Vaux apologised for his inability to attend the meeting.
3. Councillor Marc Davies advised the Committee he would be leaving at 12:15pm due to other Council Business.

**34 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

35 Chair Announcements

The Chair wished everyone a Happy New Year.

36 CYSUR / CWMPAS Combined Local Operational Group Safeguarding Report Qtr 2 2024/2025

Councillor Alun Williams, Cabinet Member and Elizabeth Upcott, Corporate Safeguarding and Quality Assurance Manager were welcomed to the meeting to present the report.

Summary of key points presented were as follows:

- There was a decrease in the number of referrals that needed to be progressed for consideration under Child Protection Procedures from 274 in Quarter 1 to 263 in Quarter 2.
There were 610 referrals received in Q2, 43.1% progressed to Strategy Discussion stage, 13% progressed to a Section 47 enquiry stage and then 2.8% progressed to an Initial Child protection Conference.
- There were 23 children/young people subject to an Initial Child Protection Conference in Quarter2 compared to 31 in Quarter 1.
- In Quarter 2 the number of children/young people who were placed on the register was 23.
- There were 15 Review conferences held in the quarter and 10 children/young people were removed from the register.
- The largest source of the referrals, this quarter, was the Police. The number of referrals received from Education decreased in this quarter.
- There were 79 Section 47 Enquiries undertaken in this quarter, 67 were undertaken jointly with the Police and 12 were undertaken as a Single agency by Social Services.
- Physical abuse was the highest category of abuse which led to a Section 47 enquiry being undertaken, followed by sexual abuse/exploitation. This is consistent with the pattern from previous quarters.
- 69.6% of Initial Child Protection Conferences were held in timescale which is a slight improvement on Quarter 1 but is still clearly not complying with Statutory Timeframes Professionals' availability seemed to be the main reasons for the delay in holding the conferences, with the need to ensure that the meetings were quorate.
- 87% of Core Groups were held in timescale.
- 90.9% of Review Professional Concerns meetings were held in timescale.
- Of the 46 children who were on the Child Protection Register, at the end of Quarter 2, the main risk factors were parental mental health difficulties, parental separation and domestic abuse.
- 10 Conferences identified that the Parents met the criteria for Inspiring Families Project and 5 of these cases were referred, 1 case was also referred to the Choices Perpetrator Programme. Of the 5 cases remaining, 4 identified that further consideration was required in this

respect and for the other case there was non-engagement from parent.

- Of the 46 children on the register, 20 were registered under the category of neglect, 18 for emotional/psychological abuse, 3 for sexual abuse/exploitation, 3 for neglect and physical abuse and 2 for physical abuse.
- Of the 10 children who were de-registered in the quarter, 7 was in receipt of further intervention through a care and support plan, 1 child needed being looked after by the Local Authority and 2 children need no further support services.

ADULT SAFEGUARDING:

- There was a marked decrease in the number of reports received of adults suspected to be at risk of abuse and/or neglect, in this quarter. Since Quarter 2 of 2023/2024, there had been an increase, quarter on quarter, in the number of reports received. However, in this quarter there has been a significant decrease from 227 in Quarter 1 of this year to 170 in Quarter 2. It is not clear the reason for the decrease in the number of reports received, at this point.
- The Police were the highest source of reports received in this quarter, followed by Local Authority Staff, the Health Board and then Provider agencies.
- Emotional/Psychological abuse was the highest category of abuse reported (87 reports), Neglect (64), Physical abuse (48), Neglect (64), Financial abuse (21) and sexual abuse (12).
- In all categories of abuse, the highest number of reported victims were females. However, in the category of Neglect, although the highest number of reported victims were females (35 reports), the number of male victims were also high (27 reports).
- The place where abuse/neglect occurred the most, was in the person's own home, then in a community setting, followed by a Health Care Setting and then a care home setting.
- The most reported person responsible for the alleged abuse/neglect was a relative/friend of the reported victim, with a paid employee being the second most reported person.

Main points raised during discussion are:

- In response to a question relating to the reason that Child Protection Conferences percentages were not 100%, the Officer confirmed that there are plans in place to rectify these issues, she stated they weren't acceptable. She also confirmed that there is now a full complement of staff.
- A Member asked if there was a specific reason why only 2 out of 35 persons had provided feedback? (*Evaluation questionnaires were provided to children/young people (of appropriate age/level of understanding), parents and carers who attended CP Conferences during the quarter. A total of 35 questionnaires were circulated; with 2 (5.7%) returned*). The Officer stated that this is not surprising as the nature is difficult for families, however, confirmed that verbal engagement takes place regularly.

- A question was raised in relation to Learning Services, (Section 10 of the agenda papers) – were Teachers included in the figures provided. The Officer confirmed that the figures include all of Learning Services.
- Monitoring Elective Home Education children was raised as a concern. It was proposed and seconded and agreed to recommend that Cabinet write to the Minister of Education expressing concerns in that the current legislation has no legal requirement for parents to inform Local Authorities of the fact that they intend to educate at home. Such a requirement would enable the Authority to more easily fulfil its duty in ascertaining whether all children in its area are receiving a suitable education. One of the advantages of local authorities being aware of home educated children is that it enables them to provide support for them.

Following discussion, Committee Members were asked to consider the following recommendation:

Recommendation(s): To note the contents of the report and the levels of activity within the Local Authority

Reasons for decision: So that governance of the Local Authority activity and its partner agencies are monitored.

Committee Members agreed to note the contents of the report and the level of activity within the Local Authority. **It was proposed and seconded and agreed to recommend that Cabinet write to the Minister of Education expressing concerns in that the current legislation has no legal requirement for parents to inform Local Authorities of the fact that they intend to educate at home.**

The Chairman thanked the Officer for presenting the information and for the excellent work undertaken by the Service.

37 **Local Authority Performance Profile Results (at 10 September 2024)**

The Chairman welcomed Rob Starr, Research and Performance Manager to the meeting to present the LAPP report.

Councillor Bryan Davies, Leader of the Council congratulated the Authority on a positive report. Overall, Ceredigion has 13 measures in the upper quartile, 12 in the upper middle quartile, 2 in the lower middle quartile and 7 in the lower quartile.

Data Cymru has developed a new performance data tool to support local authorities in better understanding their overall performance and to support Panel Performance Assessments which started in September 2024.

The new tool is called the Local Authority Performance Profile (LAPP) and contains a selection of 34 key performance measures across 11 themes, along with a variety of contextual data to help set the scene. The Profile is available as a Power BI dashboard only, there is no hard copy version.

One of the primary uses of the LAPP is to support the peers who undertake Panel Performance Assessments in understanding how the Local Authority is currently performing. This was used by the Panel in Ceredigion's recent Panel Performance Assessment between 30 September and 3 October. The LAPP will continue to be developed in the future, so the range of measures included, and some functionality will continue to improve further. The latest update of the LAPP was on 10 September and the overall findings show that:

- Ceredigion has the second highest number of performance measures in the upper quartile with 13 out of 34 measures.
- Ceredigion has the joint highest number of performance measures in the upper and upper middle quartile with 25 out of 34.
- Ceredigion has 73.5% of its measures in the upper and upper middle quartile. The next nearest authority has 67.6%. (Please note that the total number of measures for each local authority varies slightly due to minor differences in services delivered such as for those authorities that have retained their housing stock).
- Ceredigion's performance has also improved on the 21 measures (or 65.6%) in the upper and upper middle quartile in the previous unpublished results.
- Overall, Ceredigion has 13 measures in the upper quartile, 12 in the upper middle quartile, 2 in the lower middle quartile and 7 in the lower quartile.

Despite the significant challenges that Ceredigion faces through being one of the lowest funded authorities, along with the challenges around rurality and the sparse population, these results provide useful evidence that the Council is not only exercising its functions effectively, but also making the best use of the resources available.

Barry Rees, Corporate Director, took the opportunity on behalf of the Chief Executive to thank all involved within the Local Authority, (Elected Members, Officers). The recent positive audit reports received from Estyn, CIW, and Audit Wales are further evidence of this excellent work. It's the public perception that needs improving as identified in the next report on the agenda which will be challenging.

Main points arising from discussion as follows:

- Following a question, it was confirmed that at present the statistics are not yet available to compare nationally, however, Data Cymru hope to resolve this within the next few months. Members stated that a comparison would be beneficial for possible learning opportunities.
- A Member raised concern that Social Services appear in the lower quartile and stated that the service during the past few years has received increased funding. It was suggested that this is raised at the appropriate scrutiny Committee for Social Services.
- Following a question, it was confirmed that all measures will be monitored, including those in the lower quartile.

- It was noted by a member that everyone should be proud of the positive results and that Elected Members would be able to share the data with their constituents.

Following discussion, Committee Members were asked to consider the following recommendation:

Recommendation(s):

That Scrutiny note the results of the Local Authority Performance Profile.

Reasons for decision:

To share information on the overall performance of the Authority that has been collated by Data Cymru.

Committee Members agreed to note the results of the Local Authority Performance Profile.

38 National Residents Survey Results (1 August 2024 to 31 October 2024)

The Chairman again welcomed Rob Starr, Research and Performance Manager to the meeting to present the National Residents Survey Results.

The Leader of the Council advised the Committee that a total of 1,961 responses were received to the survey. This represents 3.1% of Ceredigion's population aged 16 or over. He stated that it is disappointing that many residents are unhappy with the Authority. The Leader also stated that it may be that some residents have not had personal contact with the Council but listen to the negative stories published weekly in the Media. The Leader also thanked the Staff during the Covid pandemic and Storm Darragh for working tirelessly, over and above of what is required in their daily day to day duties.

The Chairman, Councillor Evans, also thanked Council Services and other services for their work during the recent storm.

The National Residents Survey is a new initiative designed to support local authorities in meeting their consultation requirements and is part of the WLGA's Improvement Programme work with Data Cymru.

The survey provides a standard methodology and a standard set of questions for running citizens' surveys. Furthermore, Data Cymru run the survey on behalf of local authorities and provide a dashboard of the results to aid analysis once it closes. This includes benchmarking with other councils. There is no cost to local authorities, this initiative is provided free of charge.

The benefits of adopting the National Residents

Survey is:

- Standard methodology and standard set of questions
- Agreed approach with all 22 local authorities nationwide
- Survey is run independently by Data Cymru
- Benchmarking data is made available with other local authorities

To date, 11 local authorities have adopted the survey with more expected to sign up in the coming months. Ceredigion agreed to adopt the National

Residents Survey on the 17th of April 2024 and the first survey was run between 1st August 2024 and 31st October 2024. Ceredigion was the first council to run the National Residents Survey, therefore there are no comparative results with other councils available at present.

A total of 1,961 responses were received, much higher than the previous year's Stakeholder Survey that received 148 responses. This represents 3.1% of Ceredigion's population aged 16 or over.

As anticipated, there was clustering of responses around the towns of Aberystwyth Aberaeron and New Quay, but noticeably fewer responses from residents in Cardigan, Lampeter and the south of the county.

Data Cymru conducted a data cleansing exercise before the responses were provided to the Council for analysis. This exercise removed some responses according to the following criteria:

- Not enough information provided.
- Suspected bot responses.
- Partial response superseded by a complete response.

The results of the survey are split into four sections. There are 10 questions relating to the local area, 33 questions relating to the Council and its services, 2 questions relating to the role of local councillors and 2 questions relating to completing the survey. A standard set of equalities monitoring questions were also asked to help understand if the survey sample was representative of the views of Ceredigion's residents.

The overall findings show that residents are broadly satisfied with their local area as a place to live.

- 57% of respondents are very or fairly satisfied with their local area as a place to live (32% are very or dissatisfied).
- 73% strongly or slightly agree that people in their local area get on well and help each other (11% strongly or slightly disagree).
- 66% strongly or slightly agree that they feel part of their local area (17% strongly or slightly disagree).
- and 67% would recommend Ceredigion as a place to live (33% would not).

However, respondents have a lower level of satisfaction with the Council and the services it provides. This follows the trend seen in some recent consultations and engagements where a high level of negative responses were received. For example,

- 9% of respondents are very or fairly satisfied with the way the Council runs things (82% are very or dissatisfied).
- 23% feel that the Council provides services of a high quality a great deal or a fair amount (76% stated not very much or not at all).
- 16% agree that the Council provides services that represent value for money a great deal or a fair amount (81% said not very much or not at all).
- 9% feel that the Council acts on the concerns of residents a great deal or

a fair amount (88% stated not very much or not at all).

- 21% strongly or slightly agree that contacting the Council is simple (63% strongly or slightly disagree).
- 20% strongly or slightly agree that accessing up to date information about Council services is easy (57% strongly or slightly disagree).

Conversely, there was agreement amongst respondents that Council services are generally accessible and available in citizen's preferred language.

- 53% think that council services are always available in a format that is accessible to them (36% said sometimes and 2% said never).
- 71% think that council services are always available in their preferred language (22% said sometimes and 1% said never).

The National Residents Survey also includes two questions relating to local councillors. Across Ceredigion, a majority of 70% of respondents know who their local councillor is, while 30% do not. An even higher proportion of respondents (83%) are aware of all or some of the responsibilities of local councillors, while 17% are not.

The final two questions relate to completing the survey. Just over half of all respondents (51%) heard about the survey through a social media account other than the Council's own, while a further 18% heard about it via the Council's own social media account and 19% found out through a wide variety of other channels that respondents could specify in their answer. Other answers were 7% found out via an email from the Council, 2% from a councillor and 3% stated that they did not know.

The overwhelming majority of respondents (89%) found the survey very or easy to complete, 9% stated that they found it neither easy nor difficult, and just 2.4% found it very or difficult to complete.

When the results of the National Residents Survey are considered against the backdrop of the Council's high performance in recent regulatory assessments and performance metrics such as the full Estyn inspection in July 2024 and the latest Local Authority Performance Profile Results, there is clearly a disconnect between the perceptions of Ceredigion's citizens and actual performance. The results are also a focus for better understanding of residents' concerns during a time of successively difficult budget settlements, that has required increasing income generation hand in hand with measures aimed at making services more efficient.

Main points arising from the discussion were:

- It was confirmed following a question that Data Cymru has undertaken this work free of charge to the Authority.
- Following a question from a member regarding how the questions were agreed, an Officer confirmed that Data Cymru liaised with the Authorities and produced an online survey with hard copies available on request and an option of completing the survey on the telephone.

- A Member expressed his disappointment that the cover report has no negativity. It was suggested and agreed that the highest percentage should appear first Following discussion officers agreed to publish the highest figures first and the report would be amended. -
- It was acknowledged that there is clearly a disconnect between this paper and the previous one that showed the excellent performance of the Council when compared to other Local Authorities across Wales. It was suggested that more needs to be done to communicate positive messages to residents and that these results should be tracked over time to monitor trends.

Following discussion, Committee Members were asked to consider the following:

Recommendation:

1. That Overview and Scrutiny Coordinating Committee note the National Residents Survey Results.

Reasons for decision:

To share information on the views of Ceredigion’s citizens on life in Ceredigion including the services received from Ceredigion County Council.

Committee Members agreed to note the National Residents Survey, and the Chair thanked the Leader of the Council and Officers for their presence to answer questions at this morning’s meeting.

39 Ceredigion Public Services Board (PSB) meeting held on the 2nd of December 2024

Hazel Lloyd Lubran, Chair of the PSB, Diana Davies, Corporate Manager, and Timothy Bray, Partnerships and Civil Contingencies Manager, were welcomed to the meeting. Hazel Lloyd-Lubran, Chair of the PSB presented the report.

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

Main points arising from discussion as follows:

- CAVO were thanked for distributing grants to assist with food poverty and warm places. Hazel Lloyd-Lubran stated that CAVO works very closely with Ceredigion County Council in this regard.
- The Chair asked if there was any progress made with working with other Authorities. It was confirmed that one successful meeting has been held to date.

Following discussion, Committee Members were asked to consider the following recommendation:

Recommendation/s:

To receive the draft minutes of the Ceredigion PSB meeting held on 2nd December 2024.

Reason for Recommendation(s):

As the designated Scrutiny Committee for taking an overview of the overall effectiveness of the PSB.

Committee Members agreed to receive the draft minutes of the Ceredigion PSB meeting held on the 2nd of December 2024 and the Chair thanked Officers for their continued hard work.

40 Whistleblowing Policy

Elin Prysor, Corporate Lead Officer, was welcomed to the meeting to present the Whistleblowing Policy.

Elin Prysor advised the Committee Members that the Whistleblowing Policy had been reviewed and amendments made to ensure the policy is up to date.

Key changes are:

- Preamble
- What is whistleblowing?
- More detail on how to raise a concern
- Confidentiality
- External disclosures
- Update to contact information for prescribed persons and bodies
- How the Council will respond
- Protection

During discussion, the following was noted:

- It was confirmed that the training is available for all Members on Cerinet.
- The Officer confirmed that one referral is ongoing and under investigation.

Following discussion, Committee Members were asked to consider the following recommendation:

RECOMMENDATION (S):

1. To note the contents of the report, and
2. to recommend the updated policy (shown in Appendix 1 of the agenda papers) for approval by the Cabinet.

REASON FOR RECOMMENDATION (S):

To ensure that the Whistleblowing Policy and eLearning module is up to date and remains fit for purpose.

Committee Members agreed to recommend that Cabinet approve the updated Whistleblowing Policy.

41 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 7th of November 2024 Committee meeting as a true record. There were no matters arising from those minutes.

42 To receive a update from the Chairmen of the Overview and Scrutiny Committees and to consider the draft Forward Work Programmes

Each Chair/vice Chair/Overview and Scrutiny Officer in turn gave an update on their respective Committee's Forward Work Plans.

During discussion, it was agreed to add the following to a Forward Work Plan:

- Agency Workers and Recruitment – Coordinating Committee

The Chair thanked Members for attending, Officers and Cabinet Members for presenting, Translators, and Lisa Evans and Dwynwen Jones for their support during the meeting.

Confirmed at the Meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee held on 3 February 2025

Chairman: _____

Date: _____