

Minutes of the Meeting of the Healthier Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee held at the Council Chamber, Neuadd Cyngor Ceredigion, Penmorfa, Aberaeron and remotely on Wednesday, 22 January 2025

Present: Councillor Amanda Edwards (Vice-Chair), Councillors Elaine Evans, Eryl Evans, Keith Evans, Wyn Evans, Sian Maehrlein, Ann Bowen Morgan, Caryl Roberts, John Roberts, Mark Strong & Carl Worrall.

Cabinet Members present: Councillors Keith Henson, Matthew Vaux & Alun Williams.

Also in attendance: Linda Jones, Regional Partnership Board Manager, Carmarthenshire County Council & Joff Lee, Service Transformation Lead - Ceredigion, Hywel Dda University Health Board.

Officers in attendance: Donna Pritchard, Corporate Lead Officer: Porth Gofal; Greg Jones, Corporate Lead Officer: Porth Cymorth Cynnar; Llyr Hughes, Corporate Manager: Housing Services; Cerys Purches-Phillips, Senior Housing Officer-Strategy and Monitoring; Duncan Hall, Corporate Lead Officer: Finance & Procurement; Iwan Davies, Corporate Manager: Early Intervention; Lowri Edwards, Corporate Lead Officer: Democratic Services; Dwywnwen Jones, Overview and Scrutiny Officer & Neris Morgans, Democratic Services Officer.

(10.00am- 12.35pm)

1 Apologies

- i. Councillors Ceris Jones, Chair and Gwyn James apologised for their inability to attend the meeting.
- ii. Councillor Wyn Evans apologised that he would leave the meeting early.

2 Disclosure 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.

- i. Councillor Eryl Evans declared a personal interest in relation to items 4 and 5.
- ii. Dwywnwen Jones, Overview and Scrutiny Officer declared a personal and prejudicial interest in relation to item 5, in accordance with the Code of Conduct for Local Government Employees and withdrew from the meeting whilst the matter was being discussed.

3 Chair Announcements

Condolences were extended to Councillor Eryl Evans and family on the loss of her father-in-law.

4 Performance and delivery of the schemes funded via the Regional Integration Fund (RIF)

Councillor Alun Williams (Cabinet Member for Through Age and Wellbeing) presented the report on the Health and Social Care Regional Integration Fund (RIF) portfolio within Ceredigion. RIF was a 5-year fund from April 2022 to March 2027 that was created to facilitate sustainable system change through the integration of health and social care services. It aimed to build upon the excellent work undertaken through the Integrated Care Fund (ICF) and the Transformation Fund (TF). Although it was not a continuation of those schemes, some projects had previously been funded through ICF/TF.

As the RIF was now halfway through its planned five years, discussions had begun at Welsh Government (WG) around planning for the post-RIF landscape. Clear messages were emerging from the Partnership Team at WG and initial feedback on the recent reporting submission suggested a need to improve on the evidence of the projects achievements and greater consistency in the quality of the evidence. The WG team had also identified projects that they did not believe met the criteria for RIF which was key, as the funding of projects post-RIF would likely be made on two levels- that the match funding was evidenced and that the project met the RIF principles. This issue was discussed at the Integrated Executive Group to enable preparations for the end of RIF funding and the transition into any new funding stream.

Linda Jones, Regional Partnership Board Manager provided a presentation to the Committee outlining the following:

- RIF Funded Activities
- Funding Phases
- Partner Funding Breakdown
- Integrated Transformation Team
- Governance & Reporting
- Future Planning

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

- Members felt that Health Boards and other organisations needed to work closer together for the benefit of local communities; it was noted that the Integrated Transformation Team created in 2019 as part of the Transformation Fund had drawn expertise from a wide variety of sectors to support agencies to create a whole system approach.
- Concerns were raised that hospitals were over-capacity and that no cottage hospitals remained open in Ceredigion following the recent closure of Tregaron Community Hospital. Officers stated that the key message shared with WG was to focus on the flow of hospitals/ deconditioning and to support people at home and in the community from being admitted to hospitals in the first place where possible.
- It was noted that different organisations had different reporting requirements which could prove challenging. During the latest reporting period, the template used to report on projects to WG was tweaked

slightly to improve how evidence was presented, which worked well. WG were currently reviewing their reporting requirements.

- Nationally, there were 7 RIFs to reflect the 7 health board regions. Funding was broadly based on population and in terms of the West Wales Regional Partnership Board (WWRPB), Ceredigion received around 1.3m, Pembrokeshire received around £5m whilst Carmarthen received around £9m. Reassurance was provided that no funding was returned to WG and that Ceredigion's focus was to ensure it benefited from the partnership equally. Some areas of work such as autism and dementia were dealt with regionally and subject to regional funding. It was acknowledged that there was collaboration across regional borders too, and that different forums managed different elements of work.
- Improving access to services in Ceredigion was raised; Officers clarified that what support RIF could provide was being explored, however, working with partners was key. Members supported the recent trial of opening the Same Day Urgent Care based in Cardigan Integrated Care Centre at weekends.
- Officers clarified that all local authorities had an Elected Member on the WWRPB. Councillor Alun Williams as the representative for Ceredigion stated that all 3 local authorities within the region were different, and the need for a de-centralised model that was more appropriate for rural areas was raised by Officers and himself regularly.

Linda Jones agreed to share further information on the different projects with Members following the meeting.

The Chair thanked Linda Jones and Joff Lee for their attendance.

It was AGREED to note the report.

5 Common Allocations Policy

Councillor Matthew Vaux (Cabinet Member for Partnerships, Housing, Legal and Governance and Public Protection) explained that Ceredigion County Council (the Council), in agreement with partner Registered Social Landlords (Barcud, Caredig and Wales and West Housing) operated a Common Allocations Policy. This meant that applications for all social housing, no matter the landlord, were made to the Council through the Ceredigion Housing Options website. All social housing units within Ceredigion were allocated by the Landlord of the property in accordance with the policy.

The Council has worked with partners to jointly review the Allocations Policy. The growing demand for Social Housing coupled with the desire to maintain and strengthen local communities has led the Council to conduct a thorough review of the way housing was allocated in the County. The current policy has been in use since 2016 and was reviewed in 2019. Since then, there has been a change in landscape, most notably the cost of housing, cost of living, a WG focus on homelessness and the increase in demand on the housing register and homelessness service.

As of 19.12.24, there were 2082 active housing register applications with 1009 of those identified as having a priority band (A/B/C) under the current policy. An overview of the changes proposed in the policy was outlined. Whilst the bands and quotas had been amended slightly, the main principles remained the same as the previous Policy to ensure the Council met their legislative duties and strengthened further to ensure a variety of needs and vulnerable groups were captured within the policy.

Councillor Matthew Vaux proceeded to present the consultation findings and the process. The Council planned to write to all active housing register applicants (as of 28.02.25) to advise that their applications would be closed, and the need to reapply in line with the new Policy. Pending Cabinet's approval on 18.02.25, the Council planned to "go live" with the new system on 01.04.25. To facilitate the changes, the Housing Register would close to new applicants from 01.03.25 until 31.03.25. During this period, the allocations for social housing would continue from the original register, however, in agreement with the Council's Housing Association partners, no allocations would be made between 01.04.25 and 14.04.25 to allow for the waiting list to build back up from applications assessed against the new Policy. Councillor Matthew Vaux extended his thanks to Housing Services for their work and to the Council's partners for their cooperation.

Members were provided with the opportunity to ask questions which were answered by Officers and Councillor Matthew Vaux. The main points raised were as follows:

- Members thanked Housing Services for their continued work and support.
- Members highlighted the need for more social housing in the county. It was noted that social housing was mostly developed by housing associations, and such developments were subject to the local authority's planning process.
- If applicants required emergency accommodation and had pets, the service worked with providers to accommodate this where possible.
- The Chair noted that a few areas mentioned at today's meeting such as homelessness could be added to the Forward Work Programme for consideration at future meetings.

It was AGREED to recommend that the Cabinet accept the recommendations following the end of the consultation period and approve the Common Allocations Policy for full adoption.

6 Oversight of in year Financial matters

Duncan Hall, Corporate Lead Officer provided an overview of the 24/25 Controllable Revenue Budget - Financial Performance - Quarter 2 presented to the Cabinet on 03.12.24. At the time of writing the report, a projected overspend was forecasted for the year of £313k on the Controllable Budget. However, this excluded certain risks in relation to the delivery of in year savings.

An overview of the following as outlined in the report was provided:

- Budget Performance - Key challenges (including Out of County Children's placements and the use of agency staff within Social Care)
- Budget Performance - Key Benefits
- Budget Performance - Budget Savings

In relation to the BRAG Status on the 24/25 Budget Reductions, two items (item 36b- Lampeter Library & item 70- Out of County Placements) were categorised as red at the time of writing the report. Since then, item 43 (charges for non-residential care) has been changed to red as WG had decided against increasing the weekly cap from £100 to £120. A grant worth £62,500 had been received from WG to support the local authority for this financial year due to this decision. An overview of the Budget Performance - Council Tax and Budget Performance – Service Positions as presented in the report was provided. As shared at a recent Members' Workshop, the local authority had received an additional £3m from WG for various items including pay pressures and additional funding for Schools.

From a Capital Programme perspective, Ysgol Dyffryn Aeron opened its doors at the beginning of January and the Aberaeron Coastal Protection scheme end date had been extended. Both in-county facilities had been handed back to the local authority and work was on-going to have it in operation soon. Funding to support works at the local authority's care homes was included in the Capital programme for several years.

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

- Members were pleased to hear that the number of agency staff had reduced and that efforts were made to decrease reliance further along with reducing the costs associated with out-of-county placements where appropriate. Both elements continued to be a concern to Officers.
- Members extended a thanks to all involved with the work to date at the two in-county facilities that were due to become operational soon.
- It was noted that one wing at Hafan y Waun Residential Care Home was being leased by Hywel Dda University Health Board, and the remainder of the building accommodated residents from Tregerddan Care Home and those in the home before the local authority had taken ownership.

It was AGREED to note the report.

7 Age-Friendly Employer Pledge

Councillor Alun Williams (Cabinet Member for Through Age and Wellbeing) explained that Ceredigion County Council (CCC) had been admitted to the World Health Organisation Network of Age-Friendly Communities and Cities in September 2024, following the submission of a self-assessment report prepared by the Carers and Community Support Team. As part of the commitment to leading from the front on this agenda, it was proposed that CCC sign up to the Age Friendly Employer Pledge.

The pledge was a nationwide programme for UK employers who recognised the importance and value of older workers. Employers commit to improving work for people in their 50s and 60s and taking the necessary action to help them flourish in a multigenerational workforce. Discussion had taken place with the Corporate Lead Officer: People and Organisation and at Leadership Group where it was agreed that adopting the pledge would be beneficial and would not involve a departure from current practices which were inclusive in nature.

Iwan Davies, Corporate Manager advised that Cardiff Council and Powys County Council were the only Welsh local authorities to sign the pledge to date, along with national government departments and health boards. By signing the pledge, it would demonstrate Ceredigion's commitment to partner organisations in the private, third and public sectors.

It was AGREED to support the Local Authority signing up to the Age Friendly Employer Pledge and to recommend approval by the Cabinet.

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 held on 6 November 2024.

Matters arising: None.

Confirmed at the Meeting of the Healthier Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 5 March 2025

Chairman: _____

Date: _____