



Ceredigion County Council  
Overview and Scrutiny  
Annual Report  
2021/2022



## Introduction

### WHAT IS OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY?

Scrutiny Committees form part of the way in which local government in Wales operates. As well as the establishment of a decision making executive, the Local Government Act 2000 requires the establishment of one or more scrutiny committee to hold the decision makers to account, drive improvement, act as the voice of the community and play a role in assisting in policy development and review.

The Centre for Public Scrutiny (CfPS) advocates four key principles in support of effective Member scrutiny:

- i. Provide 'critical friend' challenge to executive policy makers and decision makers;
- ii. Enable the voice and concerns of the public and its communities to be heard;
- iii. Be carried out by 'independent minded governors' who lead and own the scrutiny process; and;
- iv. Is evidence based and drives improvement in public services.

The Statutory Guidance for County and County Borough Councils in Wales on Executive and Alternative Arrangements (2006) sets out that *Overview and Scrutiny committees are an essential and integral part of executive arrangements.*

In January 2017, the Welsh Government published a White Paper entitled Reforming Local Government: Resilient and Renewed. The White Paper sought views on proposals for mandatory regional working to deliver a range of services, address workforce issues and implement electoral reform. Welsh Government has since published a subsequent Green Paper explaining its ambitions and proposes a statement of intent for a stronger and more empowered local government in Wales. These proposals set out an approach for the future of local government "to deliver stronger, more resilient and sustainable public services with democratic accountability at its core".

We have during this period continued to scrutinise remotely, maintain a flexible approach to our forward work programmes and have adapted to changing priorities. Remote working has taught us to streamline processes, maintain quality yet increase our flexibility and agility.

## CALL-IN OF DECISIONS



When a decision is made by the Cabinet, an individual member of Cabinet or a Committee of the Cabinet or under joint arrangements, the decision shall be published, including where possible by electronic means, and shall be available at the main offices of the Council normally within 2 working days of being made. Members will be sent copies of the records of all such decisions within 2 working days, by the person responsible for publishing the decision. That notice will bear the date on which it is published and will specify that the decision will come into force, and may then be implemented, on the expiry of 5 working days after the publication of the decision, unless any three members of the relevant Overview and Scrutiny Committee whose terms of reference relate to the Cabinet decision (as described in Article 6 of Part 2 of the Constitution) or six Elected Members of the Council and the Chair of that Committee, object to it and call it in. Further information in relation to the call-in process is available by referring to the Council's Constitution page 263. <http://www.ceredigion.gov.uk/your-council/about-the-council/the-councils-constitution/>

Ceredigion County Council received no call-in of decisions during this reporting period:

## COMMITTEES

There are 5 thematic Overview and Scrutiny Committees, namely:

- Co-ordinating



- Thriving Communities





- Learning Communities



- Healthier Communities



- Corporate Resources

Under section 21 of the Local Government Act 2000, there are a given wide-ranging powers of review and scrutiny, and the ability to make reports and recommendations on any matters relevant to the area and its inhabitants. The guidance sets out the role of Councillors exercising overview and scrutiny as being:

- to hold the executive to account for the efficient exercise of executive functions – especially the performance of the executive as measured against the standards, objectives and targets set out in the policies and plans which it is implementing;
- to assist in the improvement and development of the Council's policies by evaluating whether they are achieving their stated objectives, whether those policies and the way they are being implemented reflect the needs and priorities of local communities and by reporting and making recommendations to the executive or the Full Council;
- to review and make reports on issues which affect the authority's area or its residents; and
- to examine whether the systems the executive has in place to deliver its functions are robust and are being properly observed.

In addition, they can review the discharge of non-executive functions and report on matters of more general local concern. This could link with the authority's power under Part 1 of the Act to promote economic, social and environmental well being, by identifying areas which the executive could address using this power.

The Local Government (Wales) Measure 2009 sets out a clear role for an authority's scrutiny function in its improvement processes: as part of its role in holding local

decision makers and policy makers to account, and in its policy development role. This should extend to:

- i. scrutiny of the processes that an authority has gone through in the discharge of the general duty to improve;
- ii. scrutiny of the fitness of the organisation to discharge the general duty to improve;
- iii. scrutiny of the processes that the authority has gone through in the selection of its improvement objectives, including a review of the level of engagement with stakeholders;
- iv. scrutiny of the monitoring of the progress of the delivery of the authority's improvement objectives;
- v. promoting innovation by challenging the status quo and encourage different ways of thinking and options for delivery.

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

During the previous reporting year, members of the Co-ordinating Overview and Scrutiny considered and discussed matters pertaining to the Scrutiny of the Ceredigion Public Service Board (PSB).

In order to comply with legislation and to ensure that effective Overview and Scrutiny arrangements are put in place for the Ceredigion PSB, it was agreed that Ceredigion County Council's Co-ordinating Overview and Scrutiny Committee take responsibility for taking an overview of the overall effectiveness of the Board.

The Ceredigion County Council Co-ordinating Overview and Scrutiny Committee agreed the following approach for taking an overview of the overall effectiveness of the PSB:

- Review or scrutinise the **decisions made or actions taken** by the Board by:
  - Acting as a formal consultee for the Assessment of Local Well-being
  - Acting as a formal consultee for the Local Well-being Plan
  - Receiving the Annual Progress Report
  - Receiving PSB minutes
  - Receiving performance monitoring reports.
- i. Review or scrutinise the Board's **governance arrangements** by:
  - Receiving the PSB Terms of Reference following each Mandatory Meeting of the Board (A 'mandatory meeting' of the Board must be held no later than 60 days after each subsequent ordinary election of councillors).
  - Inviting members of the Board to give evidence in respect of the exercise of joint functions, (but only in respect of the exercise of joint functions conferred on them as a statutory member of the Board under the Well-being of Future Generations Act).

- ii. Make reports or recommendations to the Board regarding its functions or governance arrangements.
- iii. Refer matters to the relevant Thematic Overview and Scrutiny Committee to consider further, as appropriate.
- iv. Present the recommendations from Scrutiny to Cabinet, the PSB and the relevant sub-group.

**Scrutiny Committees can undertake their work in one of the following ways:**

- i. Consider a topic during a formal meeting;
- ii. Establish a Task and Finish Group to investigate a topic in more detail;
- iii. Consider at a Work Stream; and
- iv. Undertake site visits.

The Overview and Scrutiny Committees focused on areas where they could have the greatest influence on outcomes for people of Ceredigion. This has led to a variety of topics being reviewed, some which are still ongoing.

The Members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committees have worked hard to create a culture where transparency, involvement and accountability are welcomed and where challenge is seen as a vital and positive part of improving outcomes. It remains essential that Overview and Scrutiny continues to contribute positively to supporting the delivery of the Council's priorities through its critical friend role.

**Self-evaluation of Scrutiny**

A review of the effectiveness of Overview and Scrutiny is undertaken annually. The questionnaire can be completed online.<sup>15</sup> (out of a possible 42) responses were received to the 2021/2022 questionnaire.

## Overview and Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee

The Overview and Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee met on 4 occasions during the municipal year 2021/2022.



Standard items considered at each Overview and Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee includes an update on developments in the Scrutiny function, and an update by the Chairs on the work of their Committees. This provides a clear focus for the work of the themed Committees.

### Key Issues considered

The role of the Co-ordinating Committee is to oversee all the Overview and Scrutiny Committees Forward Work Programmes to ensure that they are relevant and reflect the corporate priorities and focus on key areas. The Committee also ensures that the Forward Work Programmes are coordinated to avoid duplication, ensuring they are realistic and manageable within the resources available, and that they will add value. Each Committee agree to consider their individual Forward Work Programmes.

The CYSUR Local Operational Group Safeguarding Report quarterly reports were considered by the Committee. The reports provide management information on action taken under the All Wales Child Protection Procedures. The Reports include information provided by other agencies in relation to safeguarding the welfare of children in Ceredigion. Management information is discussed by members of the CYSUR (Ceredigion) Local Operations Group in order to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the safeguarding children arrangements in Ceredigion and the outcomes achieved. The multi-agency meetings provide an opportunity to identify and act upon any performance and other issues within this area of work. Performance information is also provided to the Mid and West Wales Regional Safeguarding Board which is also an opportunity to analyse performance, trends and issues across the Region.

The Adult Safeguarding Service quarterly reports were considered by the Committee. The reports highlight activity and performance of the Adult Safeguarding service and provides statistical data that enables a comparative analysis between

activity in different quarters and previous years as well as noting key achievements and work undertaken during the year. The report also highlights key areas of work and improvement during this financial year.

The Leader presented the report on the draft budget for 2022/2023 including the three year capital programme, outlining that this is a provisional settlement.

### **OUTCOME AND/OR IMPACT**

*Committee Members were given the opportunity to ask questions which were answered in turn by the Leader and/or Officers. Main points which arose are:*

- 1. In response to a question regarding the rising cost of National Insurance and whether the Local Authority need to cover these costs, it was confirmed that they would be covered nationally;*
- 2. That the new WG Social Care staff payment for care just announced would not impact on the budget setting process for next year and should be covered via grant funding;*
- 3. In response to a question regarding funding Corporate Joint Committees, it was confirmed that the funding has not been finalised between Powys and Ceredigion as yet;*
- 4. In response to a question whether Growing Mid Wales are part of the Corporate Joint Committee it was confirmed that it is currently separate;*
- 5. A question was asked regarding Cost Pressures, whether they are included within the balanced Budget? It was confirmed that if a 5% increase of Council Tax is agreed then this would cover the existing cost pressures. If, 4.75% is agreed, then further funds would need to be allocated;*
- 6. It was confirmed that the Leadership Group Budget has responsibility for the emergency Covid-19 fund, the cost of Out of County Care Placements and a contingency for potential Pay awards being higher than the 2.5% being allocated to Services;*
- 7. A question was raised regarding costs associated with the temporary morgues, which were established during the first wave of the pandemic. It was confirmed that 100% of the costs have been recovered;*
- 8. A question was raised regarding empty properties in villages, particularly schools and when these will be sold. It was confirmed that the Assets Panel have a process to follow in such cases and only offer surplus properties on the open market when it is deemed appropriate to do so. It was confirmed that all empty School sales monies are ring-fenced to support the 21st Century School Programme;*



9. *In response to a question in relation to the sale of the former Bodlondeb Residential Home, Penparcau, Aberystwyth, it was confirmed that the property will be available for purchase on the open market in the next few weeks; and;*

10. *It was suggested that sales of Social Care assets should be treated the same way as School assets, the receipts of which are ring-fenced for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century School Programme. It was agreed this would be discussed and considered further post-election.*

*Further detail was presented at the thematic scrutiny committees considering the budget.*

*The Committee monitor budget implications throughout the year and receive regular financial updates when considering reports.*

The Ceredigion Public Service Board minutes are regularly reported to the Committee to provide an opportunity for the Committee to scrutinise the decisions made or actions taken by the Ceredigion PSB. The Chairs of the project groups are periodically invited to the Committee to provide more in depth detail.

#### **OUTCOME AND/OR IMPACT**

*Committee Members agreed to receive the recommendations below in order for the Overview and Scrutiny Coordinating Committee to carry out their role of taking an overview of the overall effectiveness of the PSB.*

- i. To receive the minutes of the Ceredigion PSB meetings*
- ii. To receive the most recent report for the PSB Project Groups are presented to the PSB;*
- iii. To receive a focus report on the work of the Understanding Our Communities Project Group; and;*
- iv. To receive an outline of the Ceredigion Local Well-being Plan Annual Report 2020-21.*

Information on the decisions of the Covid-19 Leadership Group ('Gold Command') was regularly reported to the Committee.

#### **OUTCOME AND/OR IMPACT**

*The Committee monitored the governance of the Councils adapting decision-making arrangements.*

The Committee received an update on the Cylch Caron project which the Committee had been monitoring for a number of years. It was explained that following the withdrawal of Mid Wales Housing Association (subsequently Barcud) by

mutual consent as a development partner all other partners remain fully committed to the delivery of the Integrated Resource Centre in Tregaron – Cylch Caron. The business case was being reviewed and updated in preparation for progression of the scheme with a view to initiating a retendering for the development partner.

**OUTCOME AND/OR IMPACT**

*It was agreed that regular updates would be provided.*

'A Fair and Equal Ceredigion.' Strategic Equality Plan (SEP) Monitoring Report 2020-21 was considered by the Committee.

**OUTCOME AND/OR IMPACT**

*Members agreed to receive and suggested that Cabinet should endorse the Strategic Equality Plan (SEP) Monitoring Report April 2020 to March 2021 as presented.*

The 2020/2021 draft Well-being and Improvement Objectives Annual Report was considered by the Committee.

**OUTCOME AND/OR IMPACT**

*The Members agreed that it should be recommended to Cabinet and Council.*

The Committee receives regular updates on the report on the Council's use of the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 ('RIPA'). Committee Members were advised that there has not been any RIPA activity by any service of the Council. Authorising Officers have confirmed that they have not considered any RIPA applications during this time. Proposed changes to the Corporate RIPA Policy and Procedures were provided. The new RIPA Social Media Policy and use of the internet/social media was also considered.

**OUTCOME AND/OR IMPACT**

*Committee Members agreed to (1) note the report content, (2) note that there has been no RIPA activity by any service of the Council during the period; and; (3) note the contents of the draft amended Corporate RIPA Policy and Procedures Document and the draft RIPA Social Media Policy and agreed to recommend that Council approve the documents as presented.*

The Committee received an update on the progress in implementing the Socio-Economic Duty (SED) of the Equality Act 2010.

**OUTCOME AND/OR IMPACT**

*Monitoring progress.*

The Committee approved the Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report for 2020/21 and analysed the scrutiny self evaluation.

The Draft Assessment of Local Well-being was considered by the Committee. It had been produced in order to inform the preparation of the Ceredigion Local Well-being Plan 2023-28. The main themes and findings we outlined to the Committee.

**OUTCOME AND/OR IMPACT**

*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.*

## Corporate Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee

The Corporate Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee met seven times during the municipal year 2021/2022.



### Key Issues considered

The function of this committee is to fulfil all the functions relating to Corporate Services (to include human resources, customer services, ICT, treasury management and legal services), Inclusion/Equal Opportunities, Civil Contingencies, Business Continuity, Estates Management and Civil Registration.

A report on County Farms Environmental Regulations was presented at the 13<sup>th</sup> May 2021 Committee meeting. Members were provided with background information to the Council Farm Holdings Policy in Wales. Local Authority Farms have been a way of entering the farming industry for young people for over a century, since the Small Holdings and Allotments Act (1908). Members were then provided with information relating to Ceredigion's County Council Farm Estate.



### **OUTCOME AND/OR IMPACT**

*During the reporting year (2019/2020), three Task and Finish Groups were established to consider key work areas of the service, especially the ones that had not been examined for a period of time. Members agreed that the Authorities Estate was a valuable asset and therefore any examples of good practice or areas requiring improvement would be sought with recommendations to Cabinet when the work was completed. Due to the pandemic, this area of work had to be put on hold and it was therefore agreed that the entire Committee would continue to be involved. The Officer gave information relating to possible options and a future work programme. It was agreed that a further report would be presented following communication with each farm outlining further options.*

The groups have made a total between them of 23 suggestions/recommendations to date with many being accepted and implemented by the Cabinet Member and Officer following the Task and Finish Group meetings. The Resources, County Farms and New Demands Group as mentioned has further work to be undertaken in relation to County Farms.



At the same meeting a Human Resources Policy, Carers' Policy was presented prior to its presentation for approval by Cabinet.

### **OUTCOME AND/OR IMPACT**

Members agreed to recommend that Cabinet approve the Carer's Policy subject to consideration of the following:

- to include a contact telephone number for Ceredigion County Council Carers' Unit in point 11.2 and external organisations contacts in Section 6 of the policy as some individuals may not have access to the internet;
- to insert a paragraph in the policy referring to homeworking during the pandemic and how this could be a possible option for individuals for future flexible working;
- and:
- to reference the fact that it is a statutory duty to offer Carers a Carers Assessment.

***Cabinet agreed to include the recommendations from Scrutiny in the Policy.***

At its 7<sup>th</sup> July 2021 Committee meeting, Members considered the Revised Concerns and Complaints Policy and Procedures. The Policy was updated for two reasons:

1. To incorporate the vast organisations and operational changes which have taken place since the last policy review in 2015, which includes the centralisation of the Complaints and FOI Service; and;
2. To ensure that the Council's arrangements for managing corporate concerns and Complaints is compliant with the requirements stipulated by the Complaints Standards Authority (CSA), which was introduced under the Public Services Ombudsman (Wales) 2019 Act.

Members were advised that the Council's current Concerns and Complaints Policy is no longer fit for purpose due to the organisational, operational and legislative changes which have been implemented since the last Review in 2015.

During discussion, Committee Members complimented the Officer on the high standard in which the report was written and how clear and concise the information was reported to the Committee.

### **OUTCOME AND/OR IMPACT**

*That Corporate Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee recommended the draft Concerns and Complaints Policy and the accompanying Procedures to be presented to*

*the Council meeting for approval on 23<sup>rd</sup> September 2021.*

At its 7 July 2021 meeting, Members of the Corporate Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee considered the Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2021-2026.



During discussion, Members were pleased to hear that the pandemic had led to a decrease in sickness absence. It was suggested that a report is received regarding sickness absence at a future Committee meeting, details can be seen further in this report.

#### **OUTCOME/IMPACT**

*Members agreed to recommend that Cabinet approve the Employee Health & Wellbeing Strategy 2021-2026.*

A report on Poverty during the pandemic Ceredigion Public Service Board (PSB) Poverty Sub-group and the Hardship Strategy was considered at the 14<sup>th</sup> October 2021 Committee meeting.

Section 2 of the Children and Families (Wales) Measure 2010 put a statutory duty on Welsh Authorities to prepare and publish a Strategy that would contribute to the eradication of child poverty in Wales. Local Authorities had the option to include their strategies within their local Well-being Plan. Ceredigion County Council chose to publish a separate strategy in order to keep a specific focus on issues relating to poverty in Ceredigion.

The Tackling Hardship Strategy 2020-22 was published in August 2020 as a successor to the Ceredigion Combatting Poverty Strategy 2016-20. The Strategy had three key objectives and the Action Plan includes 65 actions, which were delivered by a range of Public Service Board partners.

#### **OUTCOME/IMPACT**

*Following discussion and consideration of the report, Members agreed the following and recommended that Cabinet:*

- *Recognises the progress made in delivery of the three key objectives of the Ceredigion Tackling Hardship Strategy and supports the 'next steps' shown on the next page:*

- 1. The PSB Poverty Sub-group will continue to develop the data dashboards to ensure we have a shared understanding of the evolving impact of COVID-19 on hardship in Ceredigion through the collation and analysis of data.*
- 2. There is a need to review the list of contributing partners. We know that there are opportunities to work collaboratively with more partner agencies in order to promote and take advantage of all available help and assistance.*
- 3. The Action Plan is a live document designed to be updated during the life of the Hardship Strategy. Some contributing partners have completed their actions while other actions are still in progress. The Action Plan will be reviewed to ensure that we continue to work together effectively to strengthen individual and community resilience as we adjust to the impact of COVID-19.*
- 4. The framework established to monitor delivery of the Hardship Strategy does not include a mechanism for partners to flag up specific issues of concern. In particular, those that the PSB may be able to address effectively on a multi-agency basis. The monitoring framework Will be adapted so that it includes a clear way of proactively identifying specific issues of concern that can be raised by support providers, citizens and PSB Sub-group members.*

At the same meeting, Members received the Talking, Listening and Working Together, Draft Engagement Policy of Ceredigion County Council.

#### **OUTCOME/IMPACT**

*Following consideration, Members agreed to recommend that Cabinet receive and endorse The 'Talking, Listening and Working Together' the Authority's draft Engagement Policy prior to Public Consultation during Winter 2021-22'.*

An update on the Authority's Clic Service was also received which is a service made up of the Corporate Contact Centre, Corporate Mail Room, Direct Contact (Face To Face), Blue Badge Team and Libraries. Members were informed that the Contact Centre (CLIC) started taking calls in September 2017 and was now providing the initial contact service for nearly all service areas. Members were advised that in the coming months, the final service area, Social Care would be transferred over to CLIC through the Through Age and Wellbeing Programme ensuring that CLIC will be the first point of contact for all services.



#### **OUTCOME/IMPACT**

*It was reported that since the start of the Pandemic and the first lockdown, 23rd March 2020, the Contact Centre team had worked wholly from home, operating a full service with little change to hours or duties. The Team had also provided additional hours of coverage, Easter Weekend in 2020 and supported the Election services during the Welsh Government and Police and Crime Commissioner elections in May 2021, offering a telephony service from 7am on 10pm on Election day.*

*In addition to providing telephone support, the team also take payments, manage corporate mailboxes and provide additional Covid-19 information service. The service had experienced many challenging times due to staffing shortage and some technical issues but endeavours to provide a high level of customer service at all times.*

The Post Room had undergone the greatest change during this period with all post from other offices now redirected to Canolfan Rheidol. The post room team was assisted by the direct contact team to carry out daily duties.

The Post Room team had been instrumental in the distribution of 38,000 vaccination letters to Ceredigion residents; 1,040 Carers Afternoon Tea Packs; Carers Wellbeing Packs; assisted with 70 educational resource packs for home educated pupils; supported the posting of all documents relating to the recently transferred Direct Payments service, whilst continuing business as usual.

Each day, post was opened, sorted into services and scanned to generic teams for processing. All timesheets, travel claims, invoices were scanned directly to payments and payroll; revenues and benefits correspondence was scanned and indexed; blue badge applications, financial assessments were all forwarded to teams along with any mail received for Complaints, Social Care, Legal, Corporate Lead Officers & Chief Executive. All original documents received were recorded and returned to customers within two working days.

The Direct Contact team had experienced the greatest disruption during the Covid-19 pandemic, with offices being closed since 20th March 2020. These members of staff were now assisting the post room team and the Blue Badge team whilst two members of the team have been redeployed to Contact Tracing. Direct Contact staff have also supported, since June 2021, with the reopening of the Libraries.

### **OUTCOME/IMPACT**

*The service is performing very well, dealing on average with approximately 9,400 calls, 1,500 emails and logging 5,600 customer enquiries every month.*

*Several members raised their concerns that they were not informed by the relevant service if a job logged by them had been actioned. In response, the Cabinet Member reported that this was being addressed by all services.*

*It was agreed to note the current position and to thank all Officers within the service for their work.*

Consideration was also given to the Library Standard Report. It was reported that the Library had to report once a year to Welsh Government on the Welsh Public Library standards, and this is the resulting report for 2019/20.

### **OUTCOME/IMPACT**

*It was agreed to accept the report.*





At the same meeting, consideration was given to the report upon the Ceredigion Senior Coroner's 2020 Statistical Return. It was stated that a report on deaths reported to the Coroner for Ceredigion was prepared annually by the Senior Coroner ('the Statistical Return') and sent to the Ministry of Justice, in order to be published as part of the Coroners' Statistics on the UK Government's website. The report of the Chief Coroner to the Lord Chancellor included a Model Coroner blueprint. This recommended that the Senior Coroner also presents a brief annual report to the Chief Coroner and the Council each July, which should be published on the Council's website, and include relevant statistics on current/concluded cases (with comparison figures for previous years), an update on Coroner work and relevant issues, a summary of the Coroner team and staffing arrangements, and any future plans. Such a report has not been provided to the Council.

Currently, it was reported that the Statistical Return contained relevant information regarding the services of the Coroner of Ceredigion, for transparency with the Public, and given that the National Statistics publication had been released, the Statistical Return was presented to the Committee.

The Governance Officer stated that it was recommended that, following consideration of the Statistical Return by the Committee, it would be published annually on the Coroner Services page of the Council's Website (taking care not to publish the return prior to the release of the National Statistics publication by the Ministry of Justice). The Ceredigion Senior Coroner and the Ministry of Justice's Civil and Administrative Justice/Justice Statistics Analytical Services had been informed of this proposal.

### **OUTCOME/IMPACT**

*The Ceredigion Senior Coroner had been invited to submit a report to the Council and/or provide any additional comments/text but confirmed that due to current workload commitments, court sitting availability and a recent staff vacancy (now filled), he was unable to prepare this year's annual report. It is hoped that a report will be provided by the Coroner next year.*

*It was agreed:*

- (i) to note the contents of the Ceredigion Senior Coroner's 2020 Statistical Return; and;*
- (ii) that the annual publication of the (redacted) Ceredigion Senior Coroner's Statistical Return be placed on the Council's website (on the Coroner Services page).*

Driving at Work - Council Fleet and Driving at Work - Use of Private Vehicles (Grey Fleet) policies were both considered at the 27<sup>th</sup> October 2021 Committee meeting. The Corporate Lead Officer, People and Organisation reported that the development of these two new policies by Service had been in Highways and Environmental. subject to consultation with Unions and their amendments where appropriate.



People & Organisation collaboration with Both polices had been the relevant Trade had been incorporated

## **OUTCOME/IMPACT**

*Following discussion, it was requested and agreed by Committee members to defer the recommendation of approval of the policy to Cabinet; in order to consider the points raised by Committee Members at the meeting to include the following:*

- In relation to the stipulation that “Drivers must ensure that they, and all passengers, are wearing seatbelts as required by law and Council policy”- Members were of the opinion that this should not be the responsibility of the driver, it should be the responsibility of the individual to wear a seatbelt; and that the policy should be amended accordingly;*
- That further consideration should be given to the stipulation that “Employees who are found to have caused damage to either an item of the Council Fleet, third party vehicle or property through negligence or driving without due care and attention may be liable, following a disciplinary hearing, for an amount of up to £250 as a contribution to insurance excess costs”. In members opinion the employee should not be liable to contribute the £250.00 but rather be provided training, a written warning and disciplinary action if employee was not suitable for the position in question. It was a matter for the Magistrates Court to determine if the employee was guilty of the offence and not the Council;*
- That employees who carry clients as passengers especially during the night in their private cars be also included within the scope of the policy (point 3);*
- Consideration be given to the fleet drivers being given advanced driving training by RoSPA, as this could reduce the insurance premium for the authority, it was agreed that this recommendation would be passed on the Corporate Lead Officer, Highways and Environmental Service who had responsibility for the Council’s vehicle fleet;*
- That following the amendments stated and subject to possible further Trade Union input, that the Policy would be represented to Committee for further consideration.*

*The Policy returned to Committee on the 13<sup>th</sup> January 2022. The Corporate Lead Officer was extremely grateful to Councillor Keith Evans, Committee Member, for the assistance and advice he provided during this process.*

The Human Resources Model Policies for Schools, Dignity at Work Policy and Procedure and Managing Sickness Absence at Work were also presented at the 27<sup>th</sup> October 2021 meeting.

The Corporate Lead Officer, People and Organisation reported that these policies had been developed and updated by People & Organisation Service and if approved would be provided to all school governing bodies in Ceredigion with a recommendation of their consideration and adoption. Both model policies had been the subject of consultation with the local teaching and support staff trade unions through the Schools Trade Union Forum. They had also been discussed, amended and agreed by the relevant Trade Unions.

The purpose of all staff policies and procedures was to clearly set out the behaviours, processes and procedures required of staff, how they can gain advice or support and, where applicable, the consequences of not adhering to the policy and/or procedure.

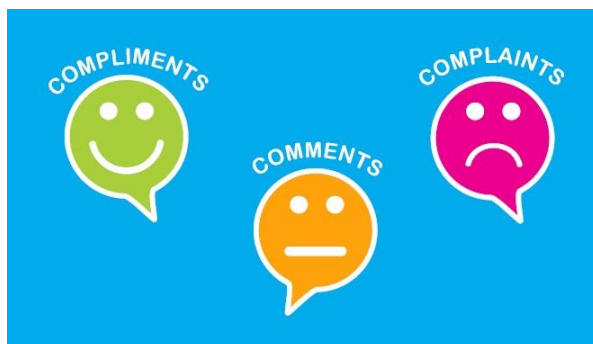
## **OUTCOME/IMPACT**

*It was agreed:*

*(i) to recommend approval of the Dignity at Work Model Policy and Procedure for Schools and to commend to Governing Bodies for adoption within schools in Ceredigion*

*(ii) to commend that the Managing Staff Sickness at Work Model Policy and Procedure for Schools to the Governing Bodies for adoption within schools in Ceredigion.*

Consideration was given to the Annual Report of Compliments, Complaints and Freedom of Information Activity 2020/2021. The report provided information relating to the work of the Council's Complaints and Freedom of Information (FOI) Service between 1st April 2020 and 31st March 2021. Specific details were provided on the number and type of compliments received, the different complaints stages, performance and outcomes relating to these and information on compliance with FOI and EIR legislation. There was also a section regarding the contact received by the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales (PSOW) during the reporting period. The Ombudsman's Annual Letter to the Council which provides further details in relation to the Ombudsman activity for Ceredigion, as well as for other Council's across Wales.



## **OUTCOME/IMPACT**

*This was the second consecutive report where there had been no Public Service Ombudsman Wales (PSOW) investigations commenced or formal reports issued in relation to complaints made against the Council.*

*Whilst improvements had been made in comparison to previous years, this report also highlighted the challenges faced by the Council due to the pandemic and officers having to adapt to new ways of working. In addition, during the period covered by this report there were significant pressures placed on the Complaints and FOI Service, which inevitably had an impact on the ability to meet prescribed and statutory timescales.*

*Brief overview of the figures for 2020 - 2021 were as follows:*

- 814 Compliments were received*
- 435 Enquiries were processed by the Complaints and FOI Service*
- 103 Complaints were received (61 at Stage 1 and 42 at Stage 2)*
- 32 'Contacts' from the PSOW*
- 756 FOI and EIR requests*

### •Internal Reviews under FOI / EIR legislation

Members were pleased to receive the information below, however, noted the areas for improvement. Committee Members congratulated the Complaints and Freedom of Information Manager and her team for an excellent report.

- This was the second consecutive reporting period in over a decade where there have been no investigations or reports issued by the PSOW.
- The Council received almost double the amount of compliments from service-users compared with 2019 – 2020. The majority of these were received by Porth Ceredigion. It is believed, however, that the actual number of compliments was likely to be far higher and more work was therefore needed to ensure that these were passed to the Complaints and FOI Service to be recorded.
- The Council received far fewer FOI/EIR requests during this reporting term and a fewer number of Internal Review requests compared with last year. Requests for Internal Review were usually only submitted when the Council refused to provide information (by applying the appropriate exemptions or exceptions). This therefore supports the Council's commitment to openness and transparency in accordance with legislation.
- It is noted that the Council's performance surrounding the response times for FOI, in particular, dropped significantly during 2020-2021. The cause for this could be attributed to several factors including the lack of capacity on the part of services to be able to prioritise FOI above all the new tasks arising; being unable to obtain hard-copies of documents due to home- working; lack of capacity within the Complaints and FOI Service (which undertakes the majority of the administrative work surrounding FOI activity; i.e. recording, acknowledging and distributing new requests and issuing all responses and applying any exemptions/exceptions and/or redactions as required).

The areas to focus on were as follows:-

- Improving adherence with timescales prescribed in complaints and FOI/EIR policies
- Improving system for capturing compliments and data surrounding lessons learned
- Continuing with open, transparent and citizen-centred approach to resolving concerns.

The Corporate Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee continue to monitor complaints as it was previously an item recorded on the Authority's Risk Register.

A Special Meeting was arranged on the 29<sup>th</sup> November 2021. Consideration was given to the Report upon A Vision towards creating a pathway to Home Ownership for the Younger Generation of Ceredigion by the Independent Group. The Chairman had requested that the matter be considered due to the economic situation facing young people in Ceredigion and the lack of opportunities to be able to purchase their

first home.



It was reported that the Independent Group had developed a proposal for the Corporate Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee to consider and create a pathway to home

ownership for young people. A report by the Independent Group outlining 'A Vision towards creating a pathway to home ownership for the younger generation of Ceredigion' was presented. It was reported that a request had been made for data to support the paper and this information was also presented. There was evidence to show that the economy in Ceredigion means that there are limited opportunities for young people to be able to purchase a first home.



### **OUTCOME/IMPACT**

*The Committee considered the report and the proposals contained, with the view of requesting a further report from Officers regarding its viability.*

*The Committee were supportive of the proposal and all recognised the need to develop a scheme that would support and enable young people to purchase their first property that would also benefit the County's economy and culture.*

*Following discussion, it was unanimously agreed:*

- (i) that the 'Vision towards creating a pathway to Home Ownership for Younger Generation of Ceredigion' was supported and passed to Officers to work up the viability of the scheme;*
- (ii) that following consideration of the scheme, Officers revert to the committee with their recommendations;*
- (iii) if the scheme was ultimately approved by Cabinet/Council, the preferred funding option was to be modelled into the annual budget setting.*

*Officers returned to the Committee for a Special Meeting on the 7<sup>th</sup> February 2022. Committee Members were asked to consider and agree to 6 recommendations, Committee Members suggested an additional recommendation which was agreed as an additional recommendation.*

*Recommendations made were as follows:*

*1.that the Council decision 24/3/16 Minute 12) Report of the Deputy Chief Executive upon the Council Tax Premiums for long-term empty homes and second homes, point 4 be amended as follows:*

*"4.a) The level of Council Tax Second Homes Premium charged to be set at 25% (with effect from 1 April 2017); and,*

*b) that all monies raised from the 25% Council Tax Second Homes Premium (net of the Council Tax refunds), be ring -fenced and used to support the Community Housing Scheme."*

2.that all monies raised from the 25% Council Tax Second Homes Premium between the period 1/4/17 to 31/3/22 (net of Council Tax refunds), to be ring-fenced and used to support the Community Housing Scheme.

3. that all monies raised from the 25% Council Tax Second Homes Premium from 1/4/22 (net of the Council Tax refunds), to be ring-fenced and used to support the Community Housing Scheme.

4. that from 1/4/22, all monies raised from the 25% Council Tax Empty Homes Premium (net of the Council Tax refunds), be ring-fenced and used to support the Community Housing Scheme.

5.that Council decision 16/3/17 minute 8.b) Council Tax Premiums on Second Homes, be revoked.

6.that details of a shared equity element of the scheme are prepared and agreed within 12 months of the Council decision and that work continues on the other options.

7.the possibility of establishing a Community Benefit Scheme be deferred for one year.

All the above were agreed by Cabinet (22.2.22) and Full Council (3.3.22).

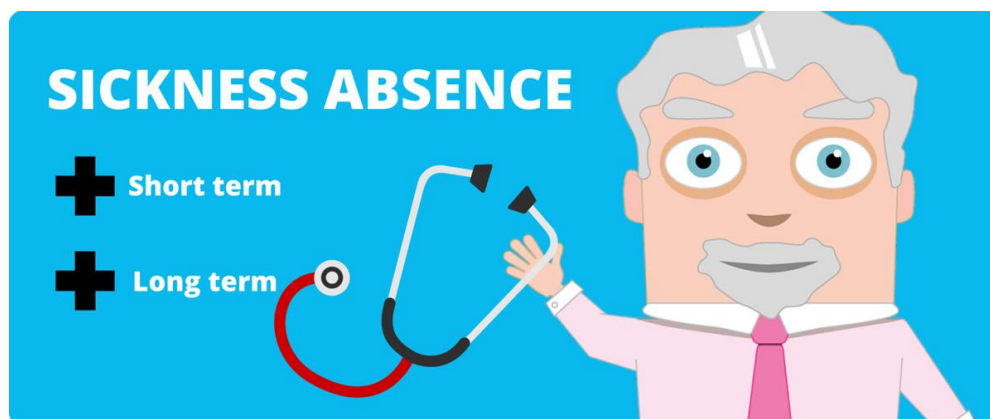
An update was provided on Sickness Absence at the 13<sup>th</sup> January 2022 Committee meeting at the Committee's request at a previous meeting. It was reported that the policy sets out procedures of managing sickness absence in the Council.

For the Corporate Workforce the Managing Sickness Absence at Work Policy & Procedure had been in place since autumn 2017. The processes outlined within the document had been fully implemented and were by now well established.

For the School Workforce, a revised model Managing Sickness Absence at Work Policy & Procedure was approved by Cabinet in December 2021 and was being offered to Governing Bodies this term for adoption.

In relation to Sickness Absence monitoring, it was reported that the monitoring of sickness absence was split into two distinct parts:

- a) Short term sickness absence – short period of absences, often only a few days as a result of minor ailments; and;
- b) Long term sickness absence – continuous absence of longer than 28 days.



## **OUTCOME/IMPACT**

*Following consideration of the information provided, it was agreed to accept the report for information.*

*It was suggested and agreed that consideration be given to providing comparable data with the private sector and with another Authority such as Powys County Council in future be presented to the Committee.*



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

## **OUTCOME/IMPACT**

*The following information was provided by power point:*

- *Background*
- *Current Situation – Broadband, Mobile*
- *Current Projects/Initiatives – Broadband, Fibre Projects, Project Gigabit. Open Market & Reviews (OMR) 2021 Mobile – Shared Rural Network, Extended Area Service (EAS), Countywide LoRaWAN Network, Ceredigion SMART Towns, Digital Website, Digital Connectivity Mapping*
- *Conclusion*

*It was agreed to note the current digital connectivity activity in Ceredigion and the work of the Council to help improve connectivity, in order to assist Members raise awareness and promote opportunities within their communities.*

The 18<sup>th</sup> February 2022 Committee Meeting was a meeting to consider the Budget for 2022/2023. The Leader of the Council, Councillor Ellen ap Gwynn, presented the report on the draft budget for 2022/2023 including the three year capital programme, explaining that this is a provisional settlement, and that the final settlement is due on the 1st March, 2022. The total revenue settlement, known as the Aggregate External Finance (AEF) allocated to Ceredigion for 2022/23 is £119.419m. This compares with 2021/22 allocation of £110.006m (adjusted for transfers) and is an increase of 8.6%. Wales as a whole has seen an average increase of 9.4% with Ceredigion ranked at 19<sup>th</sup>. The Leader advised Committee Members that since her appointment in 2012, £50 million savings had been made.



The Leader also stated that a letter had been received on 17th February 2022 from Rebecca Evans MS, Minister for Finance and Local Government announcing an increase of £50m for the local government settlement for 2021-2022. The amount to be allocated to Ceredigion County Council is unknown to date but is likely to be circa £1m. The funding is un-hypothecated (i.e. not allocated to specific services) and can be carried forward in reserves to the 2022-2023 financial year. It was explained that the implications of this additional funding would need to be considered and how that would be allocated for the 2022-2023 budget.

Members welcomed the additional funding but expressed their disappointment that the announcement was late and that it did not allow for scrutiny to take place based on the new information. The Chief Executive confirmed that information would be presented for Council on 3rd March 2022 and that there would be an opportunity to discuss the options for the additional funding. The relevant Cabinet Member then presented the information relevant to their Service Area. Committee Members considered the service budgets for those service areas that are within the Committee's remit. The relevant Cabinet Member then presented the proposed Fees and Charges.

The Chairman thanked the Leader, the Cabinet Members and the Officers for the information received at the meeting, and asked Committee Members to vote in turn if they accept, are against, or abstain from the following recommendations:

1. To consider the overall Revenue and Capital Budgets proposed.
2. To consider the estimated cost pressures being faced (£13.173m across all aspects).



3. To consider the proposed fees & charges and the resulting estimated £155k additional income to assist with the savings required.
4. To note the proposed £230k travelling savings target for officers & members.
- 5 To note the £113k savings balance still required to be found.
6. To consider the 3 options proposed for council tax levels of 4.75%, 5.0% & 5.25%.
7. To provide any other appropriate draft budget related feedback to Cabinet.

### **OUTCOME/IMPACT**

*Following consideration, Members agreed to recommend that Cabinet:*

1. *agreed the service areas budget within the Committee's remit; and;*
2. *agreed the proposed Fees and Charges as outlined in Appendix D of the report, (pages 45 of 51)*
3. *agreed the relevant Capital schemes in the proposed Capital Programme,*
4. *agreed to note the proposed £230k Travelling Savings Target for Officers & Members;*
5. *agreed to note the £113k Savings Balance still required to be found.*
6. *Due to the recent letter received from Rebecca Evans MS, Minister for Finance and Local Government on 17th February 2022, as referenced above, recommendation number 6 was not considered;*
7. *The Committee agreed to provide the following appropriate Draft Budget related feedback to Cabinet – It was agreed to recommend that the new Council Administration would consider establishing a Task and Finish Group to consider the Budget Preparation. The matter would be referred to the Democratic Services Committee in the first instance.*

Consideration was given to the Report upon the Political Restrictions on Local Government Employees Policy and Register. It was reported Section 2 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 ('the 1989 Act) established the concept of restricting political activity for certain designated posts in order to ensure political impartiality of local government employees. It was, therefore, considered necessary to review the Political Restrictions on Local Government Employees Policy (last updated January 2020) ('the Policy') due to Brexit and recent changes e.g. changes to Corporate Lead Officer titles.

It was reported that changes to the Policy include:

- Developing the explanation as to Specified Posts and Sensitive Posts (under 'Who is affected?');
- Updating the reference to the Chief Executive and CLO titles;
- Adding reference to the Head of Democratic Services and Monitoring Officer/CLO Legal & Governance to the list of Statutory Officers and deleting from 1(b) '(within the 1989 Act)':
  1. Specified Posts
  - b) the Statutory Chief Officers (within the 1989 Act)
- Adding in reference at 2. 'Sensitive' posts that these posts were also politically restricted.

### **OUTCOME/IMPACT**

*It was agreed to approve the changes to the Political Restrictions on Local Government Employees Policy.*

## Healthier Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee

The Healthier Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee met on nine separate occasions during 2021/2022.



### Key Issues considered

The Corporate Lead Officer for Porth Cynnal Specialist Services regularly attends Committee meetings to present the quarterly Independent Reviewing Service Performance Management Reports which included national and local standards, and targets used to measure outcomes for looked after children and care leavers. The Independent Reviewing Officer has regard as to whether the child/young person's human rights being breached in any way and, if so, considers a referral to CAFCASS Cymru. This action was not required at any of the review meetings in the period. These reports are considered within Multi Agency LAC Quality Assurance Meetings which meet on a quarterly basis; these meetings provide an opportunity to identify and act upon performance and other issues in relation to this area of work.

These reports are also circulated and reviewed by Local Authority's Corporate Parenting Group which is Chaired by Councillor Alun Williams, Cabinet Member for Children Services and Culture which take place on a quarterly basis.

### **OUTCOME AND/OR IMPACT**

*The importance of the Independent Reviewing Service was recognised and Members were pleased to receive assurance that the needs of Looked After Children were met and are continuously improved. Members congratulated the service's staff and expressed their gratitude for their commitment and hard work.*

The Corporate Director delivered a presentation and video to the Committee on the Through Age & Wellbeing Strategy 2021-2027 and Action Plan. Members of the

Learning Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee were also invited to attend the meeting.

It was explained that this strategy is a key part of the Ceredigion County Council Corporate Strategy that illustrates the main priorities for the Council. The priorities aim to enable the delivery of services that will enhance the social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being for the people of Ceredigion. Providing support for all ages and needs is a significant challenge for the Council with limited resources. The profile of society and demographics have changed considerably over the last decade with a significant increase in the prevalence and impact of substance misuse, poor mental health and domestic abuse and older age groups living in Ceredigion. As a consequence, demand for certain services has increased placing a greater financial pressure on those service areas. In addition, the unemployment levels coupled with the low income levels has placed increased difficulties on the ability of people to access safe, affordable housing.

### **OUTCOME AND/OR IMPACT**

*The Committee noted that it was agreed in 2017 that a systematic review of all structures and service areas should be undertaken to ensure that services across the Council have the capacity and capability to meet the priorities of the Corporate Plans and Objectives.*

*The transformation of services has progressed well with the final major change being the integration of social care and lifelong learning into the three services Porth Cymorth Cynnar, Porth Gofal and Porth Cynnal who along with Customer Contact make up the 4 main areas that fall within the Through Age & Wellbeing Programme of change.*

*Formal restructuring of these services started in late 2019 with the implementation of the Corporate Manager structure across the services. The pandemic then delayed progress during 2020 but this was then further progressed from September 2020 onwards. It was recognised that a clear strategy was required to drive and communicate the need for change and how this would be achieved. Updates and workshops with members have taken place throughout the period of change. Staff and Trade Unions have been engaged and consulted during each part of the process.*

*The purpose of the Action Plan is to clearly outline what is required over the next three years (and to signal what is likely in the years beyond that) to address the root causes in order to meet the 5 key objectives of the Strategy and, alongside our partners, rebalance the care and support to provide sustainable services within Ceredigion.*

*Following questions by the Members of the Committee it was agreed to recommend the Through Age and Wellbeing Strategy 2021-2027 and Action Plan for Cabinet approval, subject to consideration of the following recommendation:*

- That there is improved communication between Local Authority Services and the CLIC service in future.*

This was agreed by Cabinet and it was also agreed that the Committee would receive regular updates in the future when appropriate.

At the same meeting, the Corporate Lead Officer – Porth Cynnal and Statutory Director of Social Services informed the Committee that a letter had been received from Care Inspectorate Wales ('CIW') on 2nd July 2021 following the Health Assurance Check carried out during May 2021. The letter summarises the findings of the assurance check on 10 May to 14 May 2021. They focused their key lines of enquiry within the four principles of the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 and have recorded their judgements and findings aligned to these: People - Voice and Control, Prevention, Partnerships and Integration, Well-being. The summary of findings and priorities for improvement were outlined to the Committee.

### **OUTCOME AND/OR IMPACT**

*Following discussion, Members agreed to note the contents of the letter and praised all Social Services staff for their hard work and commitment to their roles prior to and during the pandemic.*

*Members wished to note that staff and the service are under increased pressure and are doing the best they can having to work within the current service pressures.*

At a special meeting held on the 22<sup>nd</sup> September 2021, The Environmental Health Manager, Performance and Public Protection presented a report to the Committee, outlining the challenges presented by COVID-19 and prioritisation of work during this time. He outlined the legislative framework and enforcement relating to fly-tipping, the RIPA regulations with regards to CCT monitoring, and regulations in relation to land ownership and responsibility for dealing with fly-tipping on private land.

It was noted that the Council monitor hotspot locations (proactive enforcement), as well as investigating complaints received (reactive enforcement). It was noted that 375 incidents of fly-tipping were logged in 2020-2021 and that 106 incidents have been logged so far this year (from 1 April to 18<sup>th</sup> August 2021). In 2020-2021, 2 fixed penalty notices were issued resulting from proactive enforcement, with none following reactive enforcement, a reduction on previous years. One caution was issued in 2020-2021 due to proactive enforcement.

The report also outlines partnership working with 'Keep Wales Tidy', Caru Ceredigion as well as adjacent local Authorities.

### **OUTCOME AND/OR IMPACT**

*Members noted that concerns regarding fly-tipping have been raised via CLIC, however there has been a lack of response. They also asked that a copy of the matrix which outlines where the responsibility sits is shared with all Councillors. Officers noted that they would look into the matter and provide copies of the matrix.*



- Members asked whether CCTV cameras could be placed on trunk roads and private land. Officers confirmed that there are no restrictions, subject to agreement with the land owner.*

- *Members asked whether greater use of technology could be made to monitor refuse left alongside skips, or if skips could be provided which have a side-opening as opposed to having to throw items over the top.*
- *Members noted that the Highways and Environmental Services will not remove fly-tipping until a member of the Public Protection team has inspected the content, and asked if the items could be relocated to Penrhos or Glanyrafon to be inspected. Officers noted that they are currently working with the Highways and Environmental Services team to review concerns such as the early presentation of waste, and that they will raise this matter with them.*
- *Members suggested that the Public Protection Team publicise information relating to fixed penalty notices in order educate and enhance greater awareness of this. Officer noted that they would look into this.*
- *Members suggested that the report is shared with Town and Community Councils, in order that they can contribute.*
- *Members noted that several complaints are received in relation to lack of bins, however a lot of take-away businesses now use cardboard which fills the bins quicker than paper, asking whether anything could be done with regards to approaching businesses to supply their own bins. Officer noted that a 'Keep Wales Tidy' coordinator had been appointed recently and that they would ask her to share this message with other officers throughout Wales for consideration as a project.*

*Following questions by the Members of the Committee it was agreed to note the contents of the report.*

The Trading Standards & Licensing Manager, Performance and Public Protection, at the same meeting, presented a report to Committee, updating Scrutiny on the issues facing the Public Protection's Community Warden Service, in particular the pest control service.



It was noted that since March 2020 the community warden service had been operating with one Community Warden as opposed to two, prioritising complaints / requests based upon the public health risk.

From September 2021 this will return to two full-time officers. Data relating to number of requests logged each year since 2016. The statutory duty on the Authority was outlined,

and it was noted that the authority will need to achieve accreditation under the SSIP scheme in order to resume joint sewer baiting work with Dŵr Cymru.

An outline was also provided of the Farm Pest Control Services offered by Ceredigion County Council, Dog Wardening and the Dog Fouling Enforcement Services, and it was noted that four temporary officers were appointed over the

summer using Welsh Government hardship funding to ensure that visitors visit Ceredigion safely and in a responsible manner.

In addition to acquiring SSIP accreditation, it was noted that the Service proposes to create a new Pest Control Policy setting out charges for various pest control services and a new safeguard for those on low income and vulnerable households, and that the Service plans to consider alternative ways of increasing dog fouling patrols / enforcement.

### **OUTCOME AND/OR IMPACT**

- *Members asked whether illegal tipping into drains was also a concern. Officers noted that it applied to fat and oils also, and that legislation was brought in circa 3 to 4 years banning the use of macerators.*
- *Members noted that they had been informed that a single officer did not have the right to lift a manhole cover by themselves and asked whether equipment could be provided to assist with this. Officer noted that manhole covers are the property of Dŵr Cymru, therefore Officer do not have the authority to lift these, and a SSIP accreditation is required in order to carry out such work.*
- *Members asked whether the increased dog attacks on sheep was a matter for this Service, noting that members of the public generally contact the Police for such matters*
- *Members asked whether Officer handling poisons are given regular health checks. Officers confirmed that this used to happen on a regular basis and that that this would resume shortly.*
- *Members asked regarding staffing resources. Officer noted that there are now two full-time members of staff, and that this would be reviewed following re-commencement of work with farms, wasps etc.*
- *Members asked about our rights in relation to dogs fouling on public footpaths. Officer noted that the challenge is to catch them in the act*
- *Members noted that they would like to see a report outlining a clear way forward with regards to rodent control, as opposed to report outlining the situation.*

### **Following discussion it was agreed to:**

*Review the situation in 6 months, and that the Service provide a detailed report outlining the income generated, and a clear way forward in relation to dealing with the issues highlighted in the report.*

The Corporate Manager, Porth Cymorth Cynnar presented a report to the Committee, which gave an update on the recent developments within the service. The Committee were informed that the Service had been reviewing progress made against the Ceredigion "Sport and Recreational Activity Strategy 2014-2020" in preparation for the development of a new plan, which is due to operate from 2022-2027. It was noted that an initial public engagement exercise was underway which will inform the development plan, forming the basis for the next stage of the consultation process.

Lampeter Leisure Centre will be the location of the Council's first Wellbeing Centre, providing an enhanced range of Through Age Services to the residents of Lampeter and mid county. Initially, Plascrug had been the intended first centre, however due to Plascrug being utilised as a field hospital, the Service were required to consider developing a Wellbeing Centre in another part of the county. On the 1<sup>st</sup> of December 2020, Cabinet approved the proposal to develop a Wellbeing Centre in Lampeter. The Service were eager to ensure that the funding was not lost and could be utilised at another location.



Indicative costing suggest that construction costs may be met by grant funding, although final costing will not be known until a tendering process has taken place. It is anticipated that building works will be completed by June / July 2022. The Leisure Centre will be closed during building works however positive discussions have been had with the University of Wales Trinity St David's regarding the joint use of their sporting facilities during this time.

### **OUTCOME AND/OR IMPACT**

*Members noted that concern had been raised by the Lampeter Lions Netball team that the reduction to the size of the Hall from 4 to 3 badminton size courts was smaller than that of a full-size netball court. Officer noted that a letter had been sent to Lampeter Lions on Thursday inviting them to meet with the Cabinet Member, the Corporate Lead Officer and the Corporate Manager for Porth Cymorth Cynnar, however have not received a response, as yet. It was noted that the service have spoken to all the other clubs that use the Hall on a regular basis, and no other objections were received. It was noted that the Netball League meetings are held at Aberaeron and that the courts at Lampeter are used for practice only. Facilities for practice will continue to be provided in the hall. There are two further full-size outdoor courts available. Officer noted that the Council is in discussion with the University of Wales Trinity St David, Lampeter with regards to sharing their facilities whilst building work is carried out. The court provided by the University is larger, being 1 metre short of a standards netball court. It was noted that Wales Netball Association is also developing the sport to include Walking Netball, Seated Netball and Tiny Tots Netball, and the development of the Wellbeing Centres will facilitate greater use of the centre by all of the residents.*

- *Members asked whether there are any guidelines in relation to size of courts. Officers noted that the standard halls are 4 badminton size courts, however some halls are smaller, others larger. There is no legal stipulation in relation to this.*
- *Members asked whether it would be possible to build an extension to the side of the building as opposed to restructuring the internal layout. Officer noted that the grant stipulated can be used to adapt assets for wider community use, to widen the potential use of the asset in question, therefore this is not an option. It was noted that if the grant funding is not spent, it would be lost.*
- *Members noted that they welcomed the provision of a Wellbeing Centre, however they did not wish to see this happen, at the cost of losing the Sports Hall. They also highlighted the need to consult with the youth of Ceredigion, as well as the elderly. Officer noted that a review carried out by 'Just Solutions' in 2018 noted that the building and provision at the time was not sustainable. At that time discussions had taken place in order to try and meet the needs of everyone including those of vulnerable people and families and it was decided that the Leisure Centres could be transformed into Wellbeing Centres to meet the needs of the residents in Ceredigion. The Wellbeing Centres are part of a wider strategy to improve the provision for people of all ages.*
- *Members noted that limited information had been provided regarding the proposed internal restructure. Officer noted that the development of the Wellbeing Centres are an integral part of the Thought Age and Wellbeing Programme and Strategy. The Strategy and the Action Plan was shared with Members in a Scrutiny meeting on Friday. The LA will be engaging with the community in order to raise their awareness of the Strategy and the Action Plan.*
- *The Cabinet Member noted that information regarding the funding and the location of the first Wellbeing Centre at Lampeter had been presented to Cabinet and that there had been no call-in at that time.*
- *Member noted that the focus of such developments tended to be around the 3 main towns in Ceredigion, and that areas such as Llandysul and Tregaron were losing out to these towns. Officer noted that outreach and pop-up provision would also be provided at other locations.*
- *Members asked whether the restructuring work would require planning permission, and whether the new planning regulations resulting from high levels of phosphates on the Teifi River Area of Special Conservation would restrict the development. It was recommended that a pre-planning application is submitted.*
- *Members asked whether the Service was in consultation with neighbouring authorities with regards to such provision. Officers confirmed that this was in place.*



*The Chair of the Committee noted that he would contact the Lions Netball team to advise them that the opportunity to discuss their concerns was still available to them.*

*Members agreed to recommend the following to Cabinet:*

- The Committee respect that the decision regarding developing the Wellbeing Centres has been made by Cabinet.*

*The Committee does, however, recommend that all information provided by Officers to Cabinet Members is fully shared with relevant Members. The Committee also considers it important that information is also shared and views sought from all stakeholders when appropriate.*

At the same meeting, the Environmental Health Manager for Policy, Performance and Public Protection presented a report to the Committee, to inform Scrutiny of the new Animal Welfare (Licensing of Activities Involving Animals) (Wales) Regulations 2021 which came into force on the 10<sup>th</sup> September, and the additional requirement resulting thereof.

The new legislation may require many local establishments selling animals as pets for profit to require a licence, however dog breeders currently licensed under the Animal Welfare (Breeding of Dogs) (Wales) Regulation 2014 are exempt and will not require two licences. Conditions placed upon the licence optimises welfare standards, which also protects the consumer. The report further stipulates statutory guidance relating to requirements of the licence.

It was noted that this may lead to an additional workload for the Public Protection team, however as a result of recent work carried out by the team, compliance with licence conditions have improved across all licensed establishments. It was also highlighted that the implementation of “Lucy Law” will serve to improve the welfare standards that Ceredigion County Council seeks to maintain across all the animal industry sectors.

### **OUTCOME AND/OR IMPACT**

*Members asked whether cross-bred dogs should be register with the Kennel Club, and whether the additional work would have an impact of staffing for the purpose of carrying out inspections. Officers noted that not all dog breeders would require registration, however if a pet has more than 3 litters a year, they may accidentally fall into this category. In such circumstances, Officers would be able to apply their judgement. Officers noted that they welcomed this legislation and that recent compliance work had led to improved standards across the County.*



*Following discussion it was agreed to note the report.*

At the 6<sup>th</sup> October 2021 Committee meeting, Consideration was given to the Report Corporate Lead Officer – Porth Gofal updating the Committee regarding recruitment of Welsh Speaking Foster Carers in Ceredigion. The update report had been requested by the committee members

It was reported that the Fostering Service in Ceredigion provided short and long term placements for the Looked after Children of Ceredigion. The age range for the service was from birth to 18 years of age. Currently Ceredigion County Council had 31 registered Foster Families.

There were also 16 Kinship carers (also known as family and friends) who had been identified and progressed through the same processes as mainstream Foster Carers and registered to provide care and support for specific Looked after child/ren as outlined in their individual registration. Ceredigion's Kinship carers were located all across the UK.

Currently, there were under 5 children within Ceredigion mainstream/Kinship Foster placement who were identified with Welsh as their preferred language of choice. However, there were children who do attend Welsh medium Education and the service recognises the importance of supporting and promoting the Welsh Language and Culture.

### **OUTCOME AND/OR IMPACT**

*Areas of further development for the service was outlined:-*

- *Recruitment – Key element for the service moving forward was to work with National and Regional recruitment campaigns that would provide a range of specifically targeted opportunities utilising National resources including media e.g. S4C and ITV advertisements. This would be enhanced by a local County Engagement and Communication plan that would focus on targeting specific campaigns driven by the identified needs for our Looked after Children in Ceredigion e.g. engaging with Young Farmers, Merched y Wawr and wider community groups.*
- *Language support – To provide Ceredigion Foster Carers with opportunities to improve their language skills through accessing training via opportunities provided through Porth Cymorth Cynnar.*
- *Cultural support – To develop an annual social and integration plan maximising on the heritage and culture of Ceredigion providing the Foster Carers with the knowledge and access to the wealth of local heritage, natural environments and cultural activities available locally. The service will be working in conjunction with Porth Cymorth Cynnar, Education and 3rd sector organisations to enhance and celebrate the wealth of local provision available to Ceredigion Foster Carers.*

*It was AGREED:-*

- (i) to note the report for information;*
- (ii) that a progress report on the Fostering service be presented at a future meeting;*
- (iii) to also place this item in the Forward Work Programme of the Committee; and*
- (iv) to thank the service for all their work within the Fostering Service*

Consideration was also given to the Report of the Corporate Lead Officer – Porth Gofal upon the Domiciliary Care Provision in Ceredigion. It was reported that in Ceredigion the Domiciliary Care provision had over a number of years continued to be met through the Commissioning Framework for Procurement for the provision of care to individual service users. This process was known as E Tender. All providers in Ceredigion were registered to the Framework having passed through a series of Procurement requirements, were then able to contract for services with Ceredigion County Council.



Once a Social Worker had identified eligible care needs following a Social Services and Wellbeing Act Assessment, a service request was made. Once confirmed the notice was placed on the E Tender Procurement Portal on Sell2Wales. The providers who were registered to deliver care within Ceredigion were then able to look at the packages of care that were required in the community and submit offers to deliver that care. These offers were made to the family and once accepted care would be arranged to commence. If a family refuse the offer (for example if care times do not meet their personal preference and a compromise was not possible), then the care request would remain on procurement pending an alternative offer. The care needs for a care and support package for highly complex care needs may require 2 care staff up to 4 times a day, 7 days a week, 52 weeks a year, and others care needs would also range throughout the spectrum of needs through to lower level interventions once or twice a week to assist with bathing/showering as an example. Care and Support at home had a focus on delivering skills to provide personal care and wellbeing needs.

Throughout the Covid 19 pandemic the Domiciliary Care Providers had worked tirelessly to sustain the care and support needs of our communities. Their staff continued to deliver to those vulnerable individuals in the face of increased risks to themselves and their families, in maintaining close contact care and support and their efforts have been and continue to be recognised as exceptional in unprecedented times.

### **OUTCOME AND/OR IMPACT**

*Following a lengthy discussion, a Committee Member put forward a recommendation to Cabinet seconded by another Member. Some Members were not comfortable*

*with this recommendation for various reasons and it was therefore put to a Committee vote.*

*The outcome of the vote was 4 in favour, 1 against and 8 abstained from the vote.*

*As there were 4 in favour of the, it was AGREED to*

*(i) note the report for information,*

*(ii) to recommend to Cabinet that they investigate the possibility of making use of Council reserve funding to provide an innovative funding package to support much needed recruitment in the Domiciliary Care Provider Sector;*

*(iii) to support an introduction of a Bonus Referral Scheme used in a Residential Care home to encourage recruitment; and*

*(iv) to thank all involved in providing the Domiciliary Care service.*

Members then received a power point presentation on the content of the report presented and the following information was outlined:-

- The Welsh Government sets out a Substance Misuse Delivery Plan 2019-2022 (Revised in Response to Covid 19)
- National Picture
- Alcohol
- Ceredigion GP Stats
- Services in Ceredigion
- Info Base Cymru- 2019-2020 Hywel Dda Ceredigion
- Barod
- Ceredigion Council Substance Misuse Service Cases
- Police – tackling supply
- Dyfed Powys Police Possession Offences Data
- Dyfed Powys Police Drug Trafficking Offences Data
- Drug Related Deaths by County
- Non-Fatal Overdoses by County

### **OUTCOME AND/OR IMPACT**

*It was AGREED to note the current position.*

At its 20<sup>th</sup> October 2021 Committee meeting, the Trading Standards & Licensing Manager updated the Committee on scams and doorstep crime issues and the work undertaken by Trading Standards.

In common with most trading standards authorities across England and Wales, Ceredigion's Trading Standards Team (TS Team) uses, as a first point of contact for members of the public, the Citizens Advice Consumer Service (CACS) which has been set up and funded nationally by central government to offer consumer civil advice and to act as a portal for referrals to local authority trading standards teams. Relevant information is then passed to each local authority on a daily basis for them to take any appropriate action. The TS Team requests that 100% of scam and doorstep crime complaints are passed through.



The Service also uses the National Intelligence Operating Model to identify priorities based on consumer detriment and vulnerability and scams and doorstep crime consistently features in its top 5 priority areas.

In 2019/20, the TS Team received 552 reports from CACS, 40 of which were specifically related to scams and doorstep crime. The Team also receive referrals from National Trading Scams Team (NTS Team). During the same period, the TS Team dealt with 48 scam victim referrals from the NTS Team; each report is triaged and the intervention depends on the level of risk associated with that individual.

It was explained that during the pandemic, with people having to stay at home, many households became reliant on good internet connectivity for online shopping, working from home, home schooling, online entertainment subscriptions, etc., and the typical online and delivery scams that fraudsters used to attempt to make money out of the unsuspecting public included:

- Texts and emails being sent to people to lure them to apply for the Covid-19 vaccine
- Automated message saying that BT were going to suspend your broadband because your IP address had been compromised, and the message asking the recipient to 'press 1' to continue.
- Automated message saying the call is from Amazon Prime claiming that they would charge the recipients card £79 for Amazon Prime.
- Text messages purporting to be from Royal Mail stating that there is a package that needs to be rescheduled, or an item is waiting to be collected and asking the recipient to press on a 'bit.ly' link.

Out of the 740 consumer complaints/reports received by the TS Team since the beginning of the pandemic, 67 cases related to Ceredigion consumers having experienced directly some form of unfair trading practice as a result of Covid-19 e.g. breach of contracts, traders refusing to refund and return deposits relating to cancelled holidays/weddings/events, or failure to provide a service, etc.

Doorstep Crime were outlined to the Committee. It is often elderly and vulnerable people that are targeted by rogue traders offering home improvement or gardening services, etc. Doorstep crime often results from an initial cold call. Unscrupulous traders will carry out unnecessary, substandard and sometimes even dangerous

work and then use strong arm tactics to persuade consumers to part with large sums of money for poor workmanship.

The TS Team works closely with partners such as Dyfed-Powys Police to try to maximise the impact locally of its activities and avoid duplication. All intelligence related to scams and doorstep crime is added to a central intelligence database which is disseminated to the Police and other enforcement agencies as appropriate.

### **OUTCOME AND/OR IMPACT**

*Committee members emphasised that additional resources for the team would be beneficial, as the majority of enforcement partners are struggling with resources.*

*The Committee considered the content of the report and AGREED to note the report and take account of the issues described.*

The Cabinet Member and 'Team Manager – Through Age Carers and Community Support' reported the achievements of the Ceredigion Carers Unit and progress against their agreed targets and objectives during the year 2020-2021.

The Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act gives Carers an equal right to have their needs assessed as those they care for. Under the act, local authorities must provide a support plan to help Carers to secure the outcomes that matter to them. Taking forward actions to ensure that these enhanced rights are recognised and actively delivered upon. The 3 national priorities were:

- Supporting life alongside caring - All Carers must have reasonable breaks from their caring role to enable them to maintain their capacity to care, and to have a life beyond caring.
- Identifying and recognising Carers - Fundamental to the success of delivering improved outcomes for Carers is the need to improve Carer's recognition of their role and to ensure they can access the necessary support.
- Providing information, advice and assistance - It is important that Carers receive the appropriate information and advice where and when they need it.



## **OUTCOME AND/OR IMPACT**

*It was stated that Ceredigion County Council remain committed to providing the best possible outcomes-focused service to enhance the lives of Carers, and to continuously improve support, services and recognition of Carers in Ceredigion. The Act provides a definition of a Carer as “a person who provides or intends to provide care for an adult or disabled child”. This removed the requirement that carers must be providing “a substantial amount of care on a regular basis”.*

*Members enquired about the respite provision that is available. The Carers Development Officer explained the various options that are available. Members emphasised how important the dissemination of information is especially in schools and doctor surgeries.*

*The Committee agreed to note the report.*

The Cabinet Member and ‘Team Manager – Through Age Carers and Community Support’ presented the report that had been produced by the West Wales Carers development Group for Welsh Government to outline the progress that has been delivered to meet the Welsh Government Carer priorities by the West Wales Care Partnership Regional Carers Development Group (WWCDG).

In April 2017, the West Wales Regional Partnership Board (RPB) agreed to include Carers as a key work stream, reflecting the importance of this population group within the responsibilities of the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014. The report presented summarised the activity of the West Wales Carer Development Group (WWCDG) during the period 1st April 2020– 31st March 2021. The WWCDG is a formal sub-group of the West Wales Regional Partnership Board (RPB) which includes representatives of Hywel Dda University Health Board (Health Board), the three Local Authorities of Carmarthenshire, Ceredigion and Pembrokeshire, as well as Third and Voluntary sector organisations, and representatives of Carers in West Wales.

2019/20 reflects the Welsh Government’s transition phase between the Carers Information and Consultation Strategies (Wales) Measure 2010 and the Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014. In their budget letter dated 14th March 2018 Welsh Government set out their expectation that health, local authorities and the third sector will work in partnership to support carers under the Act by:

- Supporting life alongside caring - providing opportunities for carers to have reasonable breaks from their caring role to enable them to maintain capacity to care, and to have a life beyond caring.
- Identifying and recognising carers - improving Carers recognition of their role and ensuring they can access the right support.
- Providing information, advice and assistance - providing appropriate advice where and when Carers need it.

## **OUTCOME AND/OR IMPACT**

*Members wished to highlight the importance of the Welsh language when caring for someone who’s first language is Welsh. Also, to ensure the links are there between*

*health boards when a patient is discharged from a neighbouring health board, in order that the appropriate care is in place for the patient at home.*

*Following consideration it was AGREED to note the report.*

On the 20<sup>th</sup> December 2021, the Cabinet Member, Councillor Gareth Lloyd and the Trading Standards and Licensing Manager presented the report to the Committee. The Authority had been approached by an individual who expressed an interest in operating a horse-drawn carriage to convey passengers along Aberystwyth Promenade.

The current Overarching Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Licensing Policy does not govern the licensing of horse-drawn carriages/omnibuses and Ceredigion County Council currently has no byelaws in place for the regulation of omnibuses.

The use of a horse and carriage to provide a public transport facility cannot be licensed as a private hire vehicle, as this function is limited to motor vehicles. A horse and carriage can be licensed for use as an 'omnibus' under the Town Police Clauses Act 1889, but in order to licence and regulate the use of such omnibuses, the Authority would have to first:

- 1) Make amendments to its existing Overarching Policy in order to introduce new specific licensing conditions for this type of transportation, and
- 2) Adopt a new byelaw to regulate horse-drawn carriages / omnibuses.

The Service received a total of 216 responses to the consultation. A summary analysis of the responses were contained in the papers.

The Committee were asked to consider the content of the report and the consultation responses and to recommend to Cabinet either:

1. that the proposed policy change is unnecessary and the Authority should consider remaining a "no omnibus" county,  
or
2. that the proposed policy change is necessary to permit omnibuses in Aberystwyth and/or any other area of the county which necessities:
  - a) adopting the new licensing conditions, and
  - b) adopting a new byelaw for the proposed to new designated route and/or any future proposed omnibus route to effectively enforce any breaches of those licensing conditions.

Questions were raised by the members including arrangements for the turning area that would be used for the horse and cart to turn at the harbour and where would the transport vehicle for the horse and cart be parked. It was emphasised that animal welfare should be a priority and that the correct signage should be erected.

The Committee acknowledged the responses to the consultation.

#### **OUTCOME AND/OR IMPACT**

*The Committee acknowledged the responses to the consultation.*



*Following further discussion the Committee AGREED to recommend that the proposed policy change is necessary to permit omnibuses in Aberystwyth and/or any other area of the county which necessities:*

*a) adopting the new licensing conditions, and*

*b) adopting a new byelaw for the proposed to new designated route and/or any future proposed omnibus route to effectively enforce any breaches of those licensing conditions.*

In March 2021 Welsh Government announced that all small and medium sized disabled adaptations would be available for all, that is, for the removal of the Test of Financial Resources. The Private Sector Housing Grants and Loans Financial Policy has been amended to reflect Welsh Government's recommendation. Due to an increase in materials and labour, the maximum available assistance for both the small disabled adaptations (formally known as the Safe, Warm and Secure grant) and the Emergency Repair Assistance is increased to reflect this. In addition to this, Welsh Government has increased the maximum amounts for the interest free loans administered by the Local Authority, and more detailed information on the interest free loans has been included.

In cases of Discretionary Disabled Grant top-ups that were greater than £15k, and special or unique circumstances, they were discussed at a Grants Panel Meeting. This has been amended to the decision being made in



accordance with the delegated powers granted to the Corporate Lead Officer (as referenced within the Constitution) in consultation with the relevant Cabinet portfolio Member. The Committee considered the proposed changes.

### **OUTCOME AND/OR IMPACT**

*Following discussion, Committee Members agreed to recommend that Cabinet:*

*Approve the proposed changes to the private Sector Housing Grants and Loans Financial Policy for Ceredigion.*

*The Chairman suggested, and Committee Members agreed, that an updated report be presented to Committee once sufficient time has been allowed for the impact following the policy implementation be assessed.*

The Leader of the Council, Councillor Ellen ap Gwynn, presented the report on the draft budget for 2022/2023 including the three year capital programme, explaining that this is a provisional settlement, and that the final settlement is due on the 1<sup>st</sup> March, 2022. The total revenue settlement, known as the Aggregate External Finance (AEF) allocated to Ceredigion for 2022/23 is £119.419m. This compares with 2021/22 allocation of £110.006m (adjusted for transfers) and is an increase of 8.6%. Wales as a whole has seen an average increase of 9.4% with Ceredigion ranked at 19<sup>th</sup>. The Leader advised Committee Members that since her appointment in 2012, £50 million savings had been made.

Ceredigion's Settlement reflects a range of less financially favourable re-distributional movements seen in population and Secondary School pupil number indicators. Standard Spending Assessments (SSA) are notional calculations of what each Council needs to spend to provide a standard level of service. The SSA for 2022/23 is £166.372m which is a 7.2% increase from the previous year (2021/22 £155.153m). The most significant service increase being personal social services at 12.2%.

The budget model has been drafted to include the adjustments with regard to the provisional settlement. Any adjustments required that arise in the final settlement will require consideration and appropriate incorporation into the budget.

The detailed assessment work carried out to identify the unavoidable cost pressures faced by Services has been finalised and identified a net total amount of £13.1m, which is summarised in Appendix 1 of the agenda papers. This amount is almost double the previous years and is £3.8m more than the increased sum available in the settlement and this would equate to the need to increase Council Tax by close to 8%, however some savings are available to the budget setting process.

The Rising costs of Care alone totals £7m, including:

- UK £9.90 Real Living Wage and 1.25% Employers National Insurance – impacts on most if not all Care related Commissioned Services (results in provisional inflation factors of 8.87% for Domiciliary Care / Supported Living, 9.13% for Residential Care and 11.15% for Direct Payments);
- Residential Homes – Fees setting review currently in progress;
- Direct Payments;
- Looked after Children; and;
- Domiciliary Care.

The Leader also advised the Committee that the provision for pay inflation is a significant factor estimated at £3.4m and that there is no formal agreement yet on the main 2021/22 pay award. After taking into account the potential funding available, a balanced budget is achievable.

A Corporate approach has been taken to dealing with the Covid-19 net costs and losses, as opposed to each service having to incur sums attributable to relevant services. This approach has ensured that financial management of the 2021/22 budgets and business as usual activity remained strong. Total hardship costs and lost income are currently forecast at a gross total of just under £7m with as much as possible being recovered and reclaimed through Welsh Government (WG) grants/funding.

Additional Covid-19 costs and some lost income will continue into the 2022/23 year and beyond. A corporate budget of £750k is therefore required in the Leadership Group budget, as well as utilising the earmarked contingency including Covid-19 Reserve estimated at £1.25m. No grant claims are due next year as the Hardship Fund will close and the Settlement now allows for this. WG have also committed to continue to supply free PPE for Health and Social Care for as long as it is required and to continue to provide funding for Test, Trace & Protect.

Council Tax needs to increase to fund fully the Budget position. An extra 4.75% of Council Tax raises a gross £2.1m, which equates to a net £1.8m after allowing for the additional budget requirement placed on the Council Tax Reduction scheme. The Council's income and cost recovery policy means that services are continuing to recover their inflationary costs relevant to chargeable services from service users, although the current issue in the near term is ensuring the recovery of income streams to pre Covid-19 levels.

The Leader explained that as this is a draft budget proposal, based on the Provisional settlement, and subject to any adjustments that may be required once the Final Settlement is known. Any necessary adjustments would be made in accordance with the following:

1. the value of any specific grants transferred into RSG will be passported through to the relevant Service's budget;
2. any other specific changes to be directly targeted to the affected Service(s), if appropriate; and;
3. any other change to the RSG will be dealt with by an adjustment to the Leadership Group Corporate revenue budget.

The Fire Authority Levy is subject to formal confirmation and is anticipated to result in a £104k cost pressure, which will require top slice funding.

The Leader concluded her presentation with a summary of cost pressures across all/most services and re-iterated that this budget report deals with the provisional settlement announcement with a recommendation to Council on the level of Council Tax for 2022/23. Council is due to consider the final budget on the 3<sup>rd</sup> March 2022 following scrutiny of the budget papers and draft proposals.

The Chairman thanked the Leader of the Council for presenting the information and also thanked Stephen Johnson, Duncan Hall and Justin Davies and their team of officers for their hard work in preparing the reports for the Committee's consideration.

The relevant Cabinet Member then presented the cost pressures affecting all/most services.

Committee Members considered the service budgets for those service areas that are within the Committee's remit; namely:

· Pyrth Porth Cymorth Cynnal, Porth Gofal, Porth Cymorth Cynnar

Sian Howys, Donna Pritchard and Elen James were present to answer any questions. Cabinet Members, Councillors Catherine Hughes and Alun Williams presented the information relevant to their respective Cabinet portfolios.

· Policy, Performance and Public Protection

Alun Williams was present to answer any questions. Cabinet Member, Councillor Gareth Lloyd presented the information relevant to his Cabinet portfolio.

Councillors Catherine Hughes and Alun Williams during the presentation took the opportunity of thanking the staff who have kept crucial Services going under extremely challenging circumstances during the past two years.

Councillor Gareth Lloyd also took the opportunity of thanking the staff who have worked tirelessly to ensure Ceredigion was as safe as possible during the past two years.

The relevant Cabinet Member and officer then presented the proposed Fees and Charges as outlined in the agenda papers.

Members were then given the opportunity to ask questions, which were answered in turn by the relevant Cabinet Member or Officer. The Chairman thanked the Leader, the Cabinet Members and the Officers for the information received at the meeting, and asked Committee Members to vote in turn if they accept, are against, or abstain from the following recommendations:

To consider the overall Revenue and Capital Budgets proposed.

1. To consider the estimated cost pressures being faced (£13.173m across all aspects).
2. To consider the proposed fees & charges and the resulting estimated £155k additional income to assist with the savings required.
3. To note the proposed £230k travelling savings target for officers & members.
4. To note the £113k savings balance still required to be found.
5. To consider the 3 options proposed for council tax levels of 4.75%, 5.0% & 5.25%.
6. To provide any other appropriate draft budget related feedback to Cabinet.

## **OUTCOME AND/OR IMPACT**

### ***Recommendations:***

*Following consideration, Members agreed to recommend that Cabinet:*

1. **APPROVE** the overall Revenue and Capital Budgets proposed;
2. **APPROVE** the estimated cost pressures;
3. **APPROVE** the proposed fees and charges as outlined in Enclosure D, appendix 2 of the agenda papers, (pages 1-13 of 51) subject to

consideration of including the following on page 9 of 51 in relation to the fees for Wellbeing Centres:

Wellbeing Centres – Ceredigion Actif Membership Packages, Porth Cymorth Cynnar:

**Agree to delegate authority to the Corporate Director and/or the Corporate Lead Officer Porth Cymorth Cynnar, in consultation with the portfolio Cabinet Member for Porth Gofal, Early Intervention, Wellbeing Hubs and Culture, to vary the Fees & Charges for the Wellbeing Centres for 2022/23, to run short term / time limited promotional offers, in order to incentivise more children, young people, individuals and families to participate in regular physical activity and lead healthier lifestyles.**

*It was agreed that further details in relation to the above would be presented at the 16<sup>th</sup> March 2022 Committee meeting.*

4. **AGREED** to note the proposed £230k travelling savings target for officers & Members;
5. **AGREED** to note the £113k savings balance still required to be found; and
6. **APPROVE** the proposed 4.75% for council tax levels, noting that:

- Members considered the 3 options proposed for Council Tax levels of 4.75%, 5.0% & 5.25%.
- 4.75% was proposed, seconded and voted upon. An increase of 5.0% was also proposed, seconded and voted upon.

*Committee members did not wish to consider 5.25%.*

- The Committee voted on the improvement first, which was an increase of 5% in Council Tax with the additional funding making provision for an additional Senior Environment Health Officer post, £55k would broadly fund, as considered and noted above on page 4 and 5 of these minutes.
- 7 Committee Members voted Against this proposal, with 5 voting For.
- The Committee then voted on the initial proposal of a Council Tax increase of 4.75%.
- The majority of Committee Members voted in favour of a 4.75% for Council Tax levels with 7 Committee Members voting For, and 5 Abstaining from the vote.
- The Committee would therefore be recommending an increase of 4.75% in Council Tax for 2022-2023.

At the March 2022 meeting, Councillor Catherine Hughes (Cabinet Member for Porth Gofal, Early Intervention, Wellbeing Hubs and Culture) presented the report. The Wellbeing Centres Service of Porth Cymorth Cynnar plays a critical role in providing opportunities that contribute to the health and wellbeing outcomes of our residents. One aspect of the Wellbeing Centres Service's is the operation of the council's leisure facilities. Encouraging residents to participate regularly in physical activity directly contributes to the improved mental and physical health of our communities and helps to build individual resilience and decrease reliance on health services.

The service generates income by charging for use of its facilities and access to the activity programmes it provides. In 2018/19 (pre pandemic) the income generated by the service equated to £752,673 of which approximately £176,000 was through membership packages (monthly set fee for various levels of access to swimming, fitness suite and exercise classes). Income Generation and Grant Aid accounted for 55% of the total cost of providing the Wellbeing Centre Service, with the remainder being provided by council core funding. As a non-statutory service, the Wellbeing Centre Service has to attract people to use its facilities. There are a number of factors that may influence where and when a person chooses to be active and pricing is one of them.

Elen James reported that the service had been severely impacted over the last 2 years but different to some local authorities, staff were redeployed and have since returned to the service. All leisure centres and swimming pools in the county have re-opened and over 350 children have registered for swimming lessons with an additional 70+ children on the waiting list. Prior to the pandemic, the service had over 900 memberships, they now only have approximately 400+, therefore work is needed to market the Wellbeing Centres, in order to encourage people to return to exercise and feel safe in doing so. The proposal is to introduce short-term offers similar to other local authorities, to increase service users of all ages to return to use the facilities. It is difficult to give examples of fees as the offers will depend on the data collected, but examples of offers were presented to the committee.

It was noted there should not be much additional cost in running the centres with the promotions in place. The purpose is to attract more people regularly.

In response to a question regarding Hywel Dda University Health Board, Elen James clarified the local authority continued to receive contributions to support the National Exercise Referral Scheme (NERS). It was reported yesterday at the Performance Board that there were over 300 new referrals. 16 weeks of support is provided and the intention is to encourage clients to continue using the facilities, after these 16 weeks, to help prevent further health problems.

No information leaflets are sent with the Council Tax Bill but the service has a website, information is also available on social media and the press office share stories. It was highlighted that the community councils should be made aware of what was on offer for all ages, to be able to publicise the service locally.

The benefits of exercise sessions to individuals' mental health was raised by Committee Members. Elen James noted that although the wellbeing centres had been closed, thousands of people have been involved / attended sessions over the last 2 years, both virtually and in-person. Over 2,000 people have participated in the wellbeing walks.

Groups held at community centres are encouraged to continue. It will be important for the local authority to work with them to ensure the public have various opportunities to improve their health and wellbeing.

**OUTCOME AND/OR IMPACT**

*Following questions by the Members of the Committee it was AGREED to delegate authority for the Corporate Director and the Corporate Lead Officer Porth Cymorth Cynnar, in consultation with the portfolio Cabinet Member to vary the Fees & Charges for 2022/23 to run short term/time limited promotional offers to incentivise more children, young people, individuals and families to participate in regular physical activity and lead healthier lifestyles.*

*Elen James agreed to report on the promotional offers in the new administration period.*



The Mid Wales Joint Health and Social Care Joint Scrutiny Group established continues to scrutinise the Mid Wales Joint Health and Social Care Board, previously the Mid Wales Healthcare Collaborative. In light of the Covid-19 pandemic several meetings were cancelled during this reporting period.

Meetings are normally held on the afternoon following each meeting of the Board meetings. The Chair, County Director and Programme Manager, and Lead Directors attended those meetings. This is a Joint Scrutiny Working Group comprising Local Authority Members from Gwynedd County Council and Ceredigion County Council and previously Powys County Council. Powys, however, withdrew its Membership at the end of 2019.

#### **OUTCOME AND/OR IMPACT**

*This provides an opportunity to examine various functions, to scrutinise decisions taken, and to consider whether service improvements can be put in place and to make recommendations to this effect. The Working Group met on four occasions during this reporting period.*



## Learning Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee

The Learning Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee met on 5 occasions during the municipal year 2021/2022.



### Key issues considered

The Forward Work Programme was monitored and updated at each Committee meeting as a standing item on each agenda.

Regular updates on the position of the school service during the Covid19 period and in particular the wellbeing and mental health of pupils were provided to the Committee. Provisions for any distance learning that took place during term time was discussed with the Committee.

Using virtual provision in future for music services was considered by the Committee. It was reported that since the first lockdown in March 2020 Ceredigion Music Service had continued to deliver instrumental/vocal lessons on the Microsoft Teams platform with the aim of ensuring that pupils continued to engage with tutors and demonstrated progression on their musical learning journey. The merits and challenges were assessed and the factors to consider moving forward.

### **OUTCOME AND/OR IMPACT**

*In conclusion it was reported that virtual provision in terms of one to one tuition and performances could and would continue to be used in the future – particularly as the threat from further Coronavirus-19 outbreaks continues. Whilst virtual provision had been successful, it cannot however replace the impact and importance of face-to-face tuition. The Music Service would therefore look to develop a blended model for the future, combining virtual and face-to-face provision to ensure the best possible learning experience for its pupils.*

*Following questions from the floor, it was agreed to note the report presented and to congratulate the service on their achievement and enthusiasm during the difficult time.*

The Partnership Agreement between the Local Authority and Schools 2021-24 was reviewed. The main changes in the document were summarised as follows:

- Changes in Ceredigion contacts/ contact details
- Changes due to change in legislation e.g. ALN Transformation/ GDPR etc
- Changes in School Improvement arrangements due to Ceredigion withdrawing from the ERW consortium

Section 2 of the Partnership Agreement may be further adapted during the period of the Agreement in accordance with the Welsh Government's 'School Improvement Guidance: Framework for Evaluation, improvement and Accountability.'

### **OUTCOME AND/OR IMPACT**

*The Committee agreed to recommend that the Partnership between the LA and Schools 2021-24 for Cabinet approval.*

A breakdown of the process of implementing the Welsh in Education Strategic Plan 2022-32 was provided, including the democratic and consultation process. An update was provided on the position of Ceredigion Schools on each of the seven outcomes and the data to support the current and future positions.

### **OUTCOME AND/OR IMPACT**

*Following a detailed presentation and questions from the floor, it was agreed to recommend to Cabinet that the plan be sent out to public consultation.*

The Welsh in Education Strategic Plan 2022-32 was then monitored during the year.

### **OUTCOME AND/OR IMPACT**

*Following consideration of the consultation responses the committee agreed to recommend the following to the Cabinet:*

- i) *To agree to adopt the content of the Welsh in Education Strategic Plan for 2022-2032 and to implement it from 1 September 2022 and for the following decade*
- ii) *That any comments made by the Welsh Government are included as amendments to the Plan and submitted to the Learning Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Cabinet for information*
- iii) *That an annual Action Plan is prepared and monitored through the Language Forum and the Bilingual Futures committee.*
- iv) *That an annual report on progress against the Welsh Education Strategic Plan is submitted to the Language Forum, Bilingual Futures committee, Learning Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Cabinet*

The Committee were informed on the development of the three Services within Porth Cymorth Cynnar namely the Pupil Referral Unit in Ceredigion, Support and Prevention Service and Lifelong Learning and Skills within Porth Cymorth Cynnar and as part of the Through-Age and Wellbeing Programme.

A detailed presentation on the three services were provided by their respective Corporate Managers/Headteacher on the background; staffing structure and the current position of each service.

### **OUTCOME AND/OR IMPACT**

*In the future Members could attend the facilities of the services to view their work, once the figures of covid 19 cases had reduced.*

Consideration was given to the Report upon the Additional Learning Needs strategy. It was reported that the New Additional Learning Needs Code for Wales was issued in March 2021 with the intention to implement the new system from September 2021. However, the implementation programme had been revised due to the impact of the pandemic.

A detailed background to the strategy was provided and the aim of the new approach, as stated in the Code. It was reported that due to the significant impact of the pandemic the ALN implementation plan was further reviewed by the Minister in July 2021.

It was reported that the Local Authorities were still awaiting the final three-year implementation guidance, which was expected to be published early in the Autumn term. This delayed guidance, was impacting the certainty of advice they were able to deliver to schools, as well as the preparation that was able to be undertaken with parents and support agencies.

The Committee received assurance that Ceredigion was already well placed to implement many of the principles of the new ALN reforms and a list of these were provided. Also, the risks that were identified due to these changes.

### **OUTCOME AND/OR IMPACT**

*Ceredigion's Principles and Expectations document would be presented to cabinet. Members also raised concern that WG had stated that implementing these changes would be cost neutral, however, this was not the case due to the extra resources required.*

Consideration was given to the GCSE and A Level results award process 2021. It was reported that it was announced in November 2020 that the traditional GCSE and A Level external examinations would not take place in the Summer of 2021. Instead, an independent panel group comprising Secondary Headteachers and other partners was put together to devise a consistent national approach for awarding examination grades for the Summer of 2021.

Although it was not possible to compare this year with last year, the Committee received the information for both years for information only.

### **OUTCOME AND/OR IMPACT**

*The Committee noted the current position.*

It was reported that In November 2020, Estyn held a virtual meeting with the Schools and Culture Department's officers, to evaluate our work in supporting schools during the Covid pandemic. Estyn subsequently outlined its findings in a letter, which had been presented to the Governance and Audit Committee and following scrutiny; Cabinet. Estyn also compiled a national report, which contained specific recommendations.

In May 2021, Estyn held a second meeting with every Local Authority and focussed on our work in response to the national report's recommendations. Estyn sent a letter to the Chief Executive on 16 July 2021, outlining our work in those areas.

**OUTCOME AND/OR IMPACT**

*It was agreed to note the report for information. Members wished to congratulate the service on the excellent report.*

Consideration was given to the Report updating the Authority's support for Schools as they prepare to implement Curriculum for Wales.

**OUTCOME AND/OR IMPACT**

*Following questions from the floor, it was agreed to note the current position and that a further report updating the committee be presented in the future.*

A report was received on E-sgol, a blended learning initiative (funded by Welsh Government and coordinated by Ceredigion) to deliver online teaching and learning opportunities using direct; real-time and interactive learning approaches. E-sgol provided support to schools around the skillsets and the range of pedagogical approaches needed to maximise the learner's experiences. The project had expanded considerably as a result of COVID, with more schools across Wales now receiving support.

**OUTCOME AND/OR IMPACT**

*The Committee noted the current position.*

The Ceredigion Youth Council Meeting Minutes were reported to the Committee.

**OUTCOME AND/OR IMPACT**

*It was agreed that Ceredigion Youth Council minutes were presented to both the Learning Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Cabinet, for information, each term.*

The Committee Members met to consider the Service budget for those service areas that are within the Committee's remit.

**OUTCOME AND/OR IMPACT**

*Following consideration, Members agreed to recommend that Cabinet:*

- 1. APPROVE the overall Revenue and Capital Budgets proposed;*
- 2. APPROVE the estimated Cost Pressures;*

3. *APPROVE the proposed Fees and Charges*
4. *AGREED to note the proposed £230k Travelling Savings Target for Officers & Members;*
5. *AGREED to note the £113k Savings Balance still required to be found.*

Consideration was given to the report upon the 21st Century Band B Projects and Additional Grant Funding. The report had been presented in order to update Members on the progress of the 21st Century Band B Projects and Projects delivered using additional Grant Funding. Information on the background and current situation in relation to Cardigan Secondary School, Canolfan y Mor, Cardigan Primary School, Aeron Valley School and the Welsh Language Capital Grant was provided to the Committee.

**OUTCOME AND/OR IMPACT**

*The Committee noted the report for information.*

Consideration was given to the report upon the Ceredigion's Additional Learning Needs Principles and Expectations document. The report had been presented in order to update the Committee on Ceredigion's Additional Learning Needs Principles and Expectations.

**OUTCOME AND/OR IMPACT**

*The Committee agreed:*

*(i) to adopt the content of Ceredigion's ALN Principles and Expectations document; and*

*(ii) that any comments made by the Welsh Government were included as amendments to the Plan and submitted to the Learning Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Cabinet for information*

*(iii) that an annual report on progress against Ceredigion's ALN Principles and Expectations be presented to Schools, the Learning Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Cabinet.*

Consideration was given to the Ceredigion Play Sufficiency Assessment 2022 to allow the committee to feed into the PSA 2022 prior to submission to Welsh Government. The background and the current position in relation to the assessment was provided to Members.

**OUTCOME AND/OR IMPACT**

*The Committee noted the current position and forthcoming work in relation to the Ceredigion Play Sufficiency Assessment 2020.*

The Committee considered the Childcare Sufficiency in Ceredigion before commencing the public consultation process of the Draft Childcare Sufficiency Assessment 2022-2027 prior to its submission to Welsh Government for recommendations of Ministers.

Consideration was given to the Report upon the Ceredigion Youth Justice Service which had been requested by Committee members.

Transforming to the new Additional Learning Needs system was considered in detail by the ALN Inclusion and Wellbeing workstream prior to being reported back to the main Committee.

## Thriving Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee

The Thriving Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee met on 8 occasions during the municipal year 2021/2022.



### **Key issues considered:**

The Forward Work Programme was monitored and updated at each regular Committee meeting as a standing item on each agenda.

The Committee considered the Report and Action Plan on Achieving Net Zero. It was reported that at the Full Council meeting of Ceredigion County Council on the 20 June 2019 agreed to:

- Commit to making Ceredigion a net zero carbon Local Authority by 2030
- Develop a clear plan for a route towards being net zero carbon within 12 months
- Call on Welsh and UK Governments to provide the necessary support and resources to enable effective carbon reductions

Further to this, on the 5th March 2020, Ceredigion County Council declared a global climate emergency, committing to meeting the most significant challenge facing our county and our planet.

The document sets out how the County Council intend to respond to the climate emergency. It explains why they need this Net Zero Carbon Action Plan and why the 2030 target was so important to tackling climate change. The Action Plan assesses

Ceredigion's current operational carbon emissions and outlines the challenges associated with the ambitious 2030 target.

The focus of the net-zero action plan was as follows were considered in detail and the anticipated next steps.

### **OUTCOME AND/OR IMPACT**

*Several members stated that they agreed in principle with the need to address this issue, however, concerns were raised regarding the cost implications of this plan to achieve the targets outlined; and that a business plan was required. In response, Officers stated that the plan had derived from the motion of the County Council. It was reported that the actual plan was achievable as work had already been carried out with numerous projects in the past and future achieving zero carbon. It was reported that funding would be available from the Welsh Government to assist and therefore a plan in place as detailed as this was required.*

*Following questions from the floor, it was agreed-*

- i. that a cross party working group be established as part of the current carbon group to push forward the plan;*
- ii. that the committee receive a regular update report every six months; and*
- iii. to recommend to Cabinet that they write to WG on the urgency of providing the reporting methodology*

A further progress update as to the actions set out within the Net Zero Action Plan was provided during the year.

The Committee considered the Ceredigion County Council's Code of Practice for Highway Safety Inspection and Response on County Roads ('Code of Practice') which sets out the policy and standard for undertaking inspections of the adopted highway network.

It was explained that once the code is approved, new inspection regime will need to be created. The Service's Highway Asset Management Plan and the Asset Management System will need to be updated and system reports amended as appropriate to reflect the requirements of the new code. Training will be required for Highway Inspectors, Superintendents and Engineers. New business processes will need to be established to facilitate the assembling of treatments into more cost effective routine planned cyclical/preventative maintenance works programmes such as ditching, gully cleaning, patching etc. Support from the Inspectorate for street works activities, enforcement and other functions will need to be developed and this is being addressed by the ongoing Highways Services restructuring proposals. It is essential that vehicle traffic and footfall counts are carried out across the network and that these are incorporated into regular reviews of the Code of Practice.

### **OUTCOME AND/OR IMPACT**



*Following a lengthy discussion Members agreed to recommend that Cabinet approve the Code of Practice for Highway Inspection and Response on County Roads 2021.*

*The Code of Practice was approved by Cabinet.*

The Committee requested a report and presentation on the following points on the introduction of Safe Zones within the County:

- Why?
- Survey Feedback
- Original Plans
- Adjusted Plans
- What happened elsewhere
- Trader Feedback
- Next Steps

The Committee were advised that due to an emergency situation regarding the Covid pandemic, a wide range of measures had to be put in place to protect the County's population and visitors, one of which was implementation of Safe Zones in Aberystwyth, Aberaeron and New Quay during June / July 2020. Following implementation, the first consultation took place between 31.7.2020 and 10.8.2020 and the second from 26.10.2020 and 21.12.2020. It was reported that good responses were received from this consultation exercise.

The presentations also provided a summary of other feedback received through Clic, from Members, the Disability Forum as well as the engagement surveys. An explanation was given of the measures put in place and how they were adjusted in response to feedback. Photographs were presented to show how the Safe Zones evolved from their implementation to the present time. Photos were also presented to show examples of similar measures elsewhere.

A summary of positive feedback from those trading outdoors was provided. This showed the measures maintained and created jobs and that there was a desire from traders to build on these opportunities in the future.

The next steps were provided which included engagement with local Members and Cabinet Members in October, followed by a report to Scrutiny in November, further engagement with Members in November and a report to Cabinet in December or January. If supported an Experimental Traffic Regulation Order (ETRO) would be introduced. This involves an on-going six month consultation period to allow for further feedback and adjustment.

### **OUTCOME AND/OR IMPACT**

*The main points raised are as follows:*

- *Committee Members agreed that regular communication with Local Members and Members of neighbouring Wards should have taken place early in the process. The Committee requested that in future early member discussions take place prior to any future decisions regarding Safe Zones;*

- *That the concerns raised by the older generation and those who are disabled are considered and reflected in proposals;*
- *That sufficient parking for the older generation and those who are disabled are provided at all times;*
- *That access for large lorries and delivery drivers are considered in future;*
- *Ensure that there is clear access for emergency services especially those with a town centre base location so that they can swiftly respond to emergency call outs;*
- *Consider Local Residents views prior to any future decisions;*
- *That consideration is given to providing more signage on the outskirts of Cardigan Town, to avoid unnecessary traffic through town;*
- *Members previously provided written views outlining possible unintended consequences. These don't appear to have been considered when implementing the safe Zone arrangements. Committee requests that these views are taken into account prior to any future decisions in relation to Safe Zones;*
- *That the Regeneration plans for all the Towns in the County, following the effects of Covid, are considered in future;*
- *Bear in mind that the Older People's Commissioner for Wales will be undertaking a review in the near future regarding the Blue Badge Scheme and whether there are sufficient parking spaces in all Towns;*
- *During discussion, Committee Members asked it to be noted that Staff from the Waste Collection Service should be praised for their hard work and commitment during the past very difficult 18 months; and;*
- *A request is made that cones and barriers that are no longer necessary are collected from Cardigan Town Centre.*

*Officers agreed to take these issues into account and a further report would be provided to Scrutiny.*

The Active Travel Network Mapping (ATNM) Review was considered by the Committee. The Committee was informed of the increasing Local Highway Authority network of Active Travel routes and infrastructure to the Highways Asset Management Plan (HAMP), which they were advised is likely to have additional resource implications for ongoing maintenance.

New routes predominantly for leisure/recreation purposes and routes outside of the three designated settlements and immediate active travel catchment area are likely to be unsuccessful and fail to attract funding. This caused concern amongst Committee Members as Ceredigion has many rural villages and Towns.

Following a request from a Committee Member, assurance was given that officers would contact Carms officers to ask them if they had any intention of improving the A484/B4333 between Newcastle Emlyn and Carmarthen.

#### **OUTCOME AND/OR IMPACT**

*Members agreed to recommend that Cabinet endorse the ATNM Review and future expansion of the Highway network and Asset management responsibilities in connection with Active Travel provision.*

*Cabinet agreed to endorse the Active Travel Network Mapping (ATNM) Review and future expansion of the Highway network and Asset management responsibilities in connection with Active Travel provision and authorised submission of the document to Welsh Government.*

The Committee requested an update on the current position of the Sewerage Treatment Works (STW) Programme. It was reported that to date three Dwr Cymru Welsh Water has adopted STW's, and four STW applications submitted are awaiting further communication. There were a further eight applications pending for future submission. Another six sites have issues that require resolution, such as easement issues, illegal connection, land issues.

Members asked many questions relating to those areas. Concern was raised with regard to some residents having to pay Business Rates which is a considerably higher amount. Members agreed that this issue needs to be resolved as a matter of urgency. Officers agreed and confirmed that work is in progress with ongoing communication with Dwr Cymru Welsh Water in regards to those cases.

#### **OUTCOME AND/OR IMPACT**

*Members noted the current position.*

Following the reporting of Safe Zones to the Committee earlier in the year Officers followed this with a report on Retaining elements of the Temporary Traffic Regulation Orders (TTROs) in towns in Ceredigion.

The proposals were presented for Experimental Traffic Regulation Orders (ETRO), as part of the process for making selected parking and traffic flow elements installed temporarily in response to the Covid-19 pandemic, to be made permanent features.

It was stated that the review of the temporary arrangements had recognised that some of the elements implemented gave rise to wider benefits to society, and that there is a case for commencing a legal process for possibly making these permanent, by making two ETRO's. One for parking restrictions that will amend the existing countywide Parking Traffic Order and the other for 'moving' regulations such as one-way traffic flows, prohibitions of right/left turn, no entry etc.

The proposed measures to retain/amend were then presented to the Committee for each Town.

### **OUTCOME AND/OR IMPACT**

*Members asked that consideration be provided to those who are elderly and infirm and do not have a blue badge to whom parking within close proximity of town is of great importance. In response, it was confirmed that the study undertaken looked at each town individually.*

*In response to a question, Officers confirmed that they would need to investigate the blue badge allocation hours that a Member referred to as having decreased from 3 hours to 2 hours as the Member considered that the original 3 hours should now be reinstated in all affected locations.*

*In response to another question, Officers confirmed that pooling of water had been an issue at some locations and that where it is an issue it is easily rectifiable.*

*It was confirmed following a query that licensing fees would be applied from 2022, and that the reason for not applying charges until then was to support Ceredigion's Traders during an extremely difficult challenging period.*

*It was confirmed following a question that parking for members of the public is available for 30 minutes at Baker Street, Aberystwyth from 1pm until 6pm daily. It was also reiterated that as the consultation will be over a 6-month period, all comments, suggestions, views would be considered in relation to these, and any other, arrangements.*

*Regarding Cardigan Town Council, following a question, it was confirmed that the loading bay near the Castle has been located as close as it could be in order for traffic to pass comfortably. It was also requested that Officers investigate a request for signage to warn lorries that a particular road is unsuitable for large loads. A request was made for increased traffic warden presence on Pendre.*

*Committee Members agreed that the notice of intent, which will be submitted to press in February 2022 with information regarding the 6-month consultation period, needs to be highlighted and communicated to the public.*

*Committee Members agreed that easy access for everyone is key and that the older and infirm (those without blue badges) need to be accommodated too. A recommendation was made that when the car park charging fees are set that they are affordable for all so that residents can continue to shop in their local towns.*

*In response to a question regarding the proposed timetable for implementation, these are Officer proposals that will require Cabinet ratification.*

*A Committee Member raised concerns that he had received many complaints from his constituents who reside out of Aberystwyth Town that they are no longer comfortable with shopping in town due to the road closures and the one-way*

systems. An Officer confirmed that the safe zones was a separate issue and moving forward under these experimental orders, the public have an opportunity to express their views for future consideration. Committee Members welcomed this consultation opportunity.

The Chairman then gave non-Committee Members an opportunity to speak and concerns were raised as follows:

- Parking for residents has been extremely difficult and the impact on those individuals should be considered;
- Traffic Flow efficiency should be considered;
- A full report on economic impact would be beneficial;
- It was suggested that a drop-off point should be considered outside the Factory Shop in Cardigan;
- Extended pavements have seen increased flooding in Pendre, Cardigan.

Committee Members agreed to recommend the following amended recommendation (changes highlighted in bold) to Cabinet:

It is recommended that these proposals, and any amendments to them deemed necessary **following discussion at the Thriving Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on the 8th November, and after consultation with Local Members** be approved for submission to Cabinet to seek authorisation for the making of the necessary Experimental Traffic Regulation Orders and the publishing of a Notice to that effect in the local press and revoke all other measures associated with the Safe Zone Temporary Traffic Orders.

Representatives from Dwr Cymru Welsh Water (DCWW) attended the meeting as requested at a previous Thriving Communities meeting. The request was to discuss the phosphate situation in Ceredigion, as well as issues around Waste Water Treatment Plant (WWTP) discharging effluent into the other riverine areas of Ceredigion (namely Aberaeron harbour) and response times for consultations by the Development Management Service. DCWW Officers relevant to those topic areas in question agreed to attend this morning's meeting.

#### **OUTCOME AND/OR IMPACT**

The Chairman wrote to Natural Resources Wales, expressing their disappointment that a representative did not attend the meeting as was previously agreed.

Natural Resources Wales attended a Special Meeting which was arranged following the letter sent by the Committee.

#### **OUTCOME AND/OR IMPACT**

The Committee wrote to the Chairman of Natural Resources Wales and the Welsh Government expressing the concerns raised at the meeting including a number of questions remain outstanding, outlined as follows:

In relation to the NRW advice to planning authorities for planning applications affecting phosphorus sensitive river SACs:

*In relation to the yet to be released amended Phosphorus Guidance - when is this expected as it has been pushed back repeatedly since January and a number of applications have been held off or refused which could potentially be re-evaluated subject to the as yet to be seen guidance?*

*In relation to the settlements where 'P' stripping is proposed in Ceredigion:*

*Phosphate stripping may be introduced in AMP 8 into 2 CCC settlements (Tregaron and Pontrhydyfendigaid) given we understand NRW direct DCWW where to install it - why can't our larger settlements of Lampeter and Llandysul be prioritised given they are part of the regional growth zone as identified in Future Wales and the proposed AMP 8 P stripping settlements are not?*

*In relation to Phosphate run off and the likely impact of agriculture:*

*What progress has been made at a national level in engaging with the agricultural industry at the National Oversight group given early apportionment work suggests over 80% of phosphorous is as a result of agricultural run-off?*

*Have agricultural and environmental sub groups been established alongside the planning sub group given the cross-cutting issues of solving the phosphate problem? And what progress has been made?*

*In relation to phosphorus mitigations work:*

*We note in the presentation there was discussion of the Carmarthenshire Nutrient Calculator and discussions over its future use. Have NRW determined whether they intend to adopt the Carmarthenshire nutrient calculator as the Wales wide calculator as was originally expected - thus demonstrating the national approach to this issue and again resource savings this would yield? What are the timelines for this decision?*

*What resource support will be available to LAs to develop their own calculators if a Wales Wide approach is not adopted?*

*In relation to the Marine Sacs monitoring:*

*We understand the Marine SAC nutrient data has been collected and collated and is now awaiting legal guidance - a) did this same process occur for the riverine SACs? and b) what is the expected time line for release? And c) when will local authorities be consulted and engaged on the implications of the potential release in accordance with the WCFG Act 5 ways of working?*

*We noted in the presentation to scrutiny discussion over Nutrient Management Boards and we appreciate the support NRW have provided in this regard however:*

*What progress has been made at the national (NRW and WG) level in providing resource support to LAs to establish Nutrient Management Boards and the associated NM plans? Given we have worked collaboratively across the region to be*

*the first to start we would like to see the impetus maintained and a regional NMB officer to coordinate the activities and budgetary support for the necessary research required which will likely have cost implications.*

*Furthermore, given the difficulties associated with NMBs in other areas (Herefordshire and the Wye) is it not a risk to assume NMBs in Wales will be more effective and quicker in delivering the NM plans and managing the competing demands of stakeholders - when action is needed now to deliver both open market and affordable homes along the Teifi valley?*

*Finally has any progress been made in creating a time line of data releases for the various evidence being undertaken / commissioned given much is now substantially delayed and LAs need to plan work programmes, NMB plan development and LDP delivery agreements?*

- apportionment work*
- amended phosphorous guidance*
- Wales Wide Calculator*
- Mitigations and solutions list*
- Marine SAC data*

The Committee previously agreed to regular updates on Ash-die back. The risk is that dead and diseased trees are likely to pose a health and safety danger to the public, together with the significant economic, environmental and landscape impact. The situation is of such a concern that Ash-die back is on the Authority's Risk Register.

#### **OUTCOME AND/OR IMPACT**

*The Committee requested an update on the previous recommendations that had been made that a feasibility study is undertaken to explore options for this work to be undertaken internally, and the bi-products use for fuelling the Authority's biomass, and that this is then reported back to the Committee.*

The Committee requested the service attend a scrutiny committee to answer specific questions on the waste management service.

#### **OUTCOME AND/OR IMPACT**

*Members noted the content of the report and requested another update in due course.*

Members requested a report with further details to the proposals presented to the Committee on the 10 October 2019 on Pay and Display Car Parks. This followed a previous review undertaken by the Committee.

#### **OUTCOME AND/OR IMPACT**

*Committee Members agreed to support further work to be undertaken on the concept of rationalising the charging structure at Ceredigion County Council's Pay and Display Car Parks.*

The Committee considered the Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment 2022 (GTAA) .

**OUTCOME AND/OR IMPACT**

*Following discussion, Committee Members agreed to recommend to Cabinet: that the GTAA 2022 is submitted to Welsh Government for Agreement.*

The Thriving Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee Members met to consider the Service budget for those service areas that are within the Committee's remit.

**OUTCOME AND/OR IMPACT**

*Following consideration, Members agreed to recommend that Cabinet:*

- 1. APPROVE the overall Revenue and Capital Budgets proposed;*
- 2. APPROVE the estimated Cost Pressures;*
- 3. APPROVE the proposed Fees and Charges as outlined in Enclosure D, appendix 2 of the agenda papers*
- 4. AGREED to note the proposed £230k Travelling Savings Target for Officers & Members;*
- 5. AGREED to note the £113k Savings Balance still required to be found; and*
- 6. The Committee also agreed to provide the following appropriate Draft Budget related recommendations to Cabinet:*
  - a) that a catamaran is treated the same as a monohull boat for the 2022/23 fees and charges whilst a review of the policy is undertaken. Catamarans should not be discouraged as they are the same size as a mono hull boat, safer, more stable, easier manoeuvrability and better for the environment.*
  - b) that car parking fees are removed at Tregaron and Llandysul.*

*Cabinet accepted the recommendations.*



## **Performance Board**

The Chairman and Vice Chairman of the five thematic Overview and Scrutiny Committees attend meetings of the Performance Board.

This provides a forum where members of the Performance Board come together to:

- obtain a holistic view of the Council's performance;
- identify and explore high level cross-cutting issues that affect more than one service area e.g. the welfare reform;
- critically challenge areas of poor performance; and
- identify service improvement opportunities, risks to service delivery, and resource implications.

This allows the Chairman and Vice Chairman to be able to identify topics which require further attention by the Overview and Scrutiny Committees and for its inclusion on the Forward Work Programme of the Committee.

**Lisa Evans, Standards & Scrutiny Officer**  
**Dwynwen Jones, Overview & Scrutiny Officer**