Ceredigion County Council

Overview and Scrutiny

Annual Report 2012/13

Introduction

What is Overview and Scrutiny?

The Local Government Act 2000 provided executive arrangements which replaced the old committee system of local government with a system in which a small, clearly identified executive (the Cabinet) is responsible for providing leadership and taking decisions within a framework agreed by the full council; and where new overview and scrutiny committees review the performance of the executive and seek continuous improvement and development.

Prior to the Local Elections in May 2012 Members of the Overview and Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee reviewed the Overview and Scrutiny structure of the Council in the context of a number of factors which impact on the way in which the Council operates and provides services including the recommendations contained in the Wales Audit Office Corporate Assessment Letter of August 2011. The old structure comprised of one Co-ordinating and six subject Overview and Scrutiny Committees which mirrored the six Cabinet portfolios. The new structure comprises of 5 thematic Overview and Scrutiny Committees, namely:

- Thriving Communities
- Healthier Communities
- Learning Communities
- Corporate
- Co-ordinating.

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. Under section 21 of the Local Government Act 2000 they are 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 are able to review the discharge of non-executive functions and to 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 more recent 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:

- scrutiny of the processes that an authority has gone through in the discharge of the general duty to improve;
- scrutiny of the fitness of the organisation to discharge the general duty to improve;
- 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;
- scrutiny of the monitoring of the progress of the delivery of the authority's improvement objectives;
- promoting innovation by challenging the status quo and encourage different ways of thinking and options for delivery.

Overview and Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee

The Overview and Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee met on six occasions during the municipal year 2012/2013.

Standard items that are considered at each Overview and Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee include an update on developments in the Scrutiny field, and an update by the Chairmen on the work of their Committees.

Key Issues considered in 2012/13

The Committee received regular updates on overview and scrutiny matters including updates from the Wales Overview and Scrutiny Officers Network meetings, updates on the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011 and governance issues.

The draft Improvement Plan for 2012/13 was considered by the Committee prior to being presented to Cabinet and Council.

The Committee continued to monitor the Ceredigion Safeguarding Children and Vulnerable Adults Action Plan and the Child Protection Business Plan following the Joint Report of Estyn and CSSIW in respect of their joint investigation into the handling and management of allegations of professional abuse and the arrangements for safeguarding and protecting children in education services in Pembrokeshire County Council.

The Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Audit Committee were co-opted as non-voting members to the Committee following a recommendation by the Audit Committee that the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Audit Committee be co-opted as non-voting members onto the Committee in order to improve co-ordination and forward planning of topics for scrutiny in the context of continuous improvement and performance management.

The proposed 2013-14 budget was presented to the Committee by the Leader, and the Committee considered it as a whole before the individual committees considered the draft budgets for their respective services.

The Committee considered the development of the Overview and Scrutiny Forward Work Programmes for 2012/13. The role of the Co-ordinating Committee is to oversee the Forward Work Programmes and ensure that they are relevant to corporate priorities and focusing on the key areas, coordinated to avoid duplication, realistic and manageable within the resources available, and that they will add value. The Committee agreed that each committee should consider their individual Forward Work Programmes in accordance with the guidance in the report.

The draft Single Integrated Plan was considered by the Committee prior and post consultation. The content of the Draft Plan was outlined to the Committee, including:

- The WG requirements and timetable for preparing a plan
- The process followed to date, including the all-Member workshop held by the Council
- The five guiding principles and three priority themes agreed by the LSB as the basis for the proposals contained in the Plan
- The timetable for consultation, consideration and approval by the end of April 2013 in order to meet the WG timetable
- The reference in the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011 for scrutinising the work of the LSB and monitoring progress in implementing the Plan and the arrangements put in place by the Council.

The revised structure established for the LSB was outlined including a reduction in the partnerships accountable to it from eight to five.

The Improvement Plan Objectives 2013-17 were considered by the Committee. The four key areas that had been identified by the Cabinet as Improvement Objectives for 2013-14 received detailed discussion:

- Improving carbon management to enable the Council to be 'greener' and more efficient
- Improve standards of education in the Foundation Phase (3-7 years old) and Key Stage 4 (16 years old)
- Helping older people to live more independently
- Develop the economic prospects of Aberystwyth as a regional centre.

The quarterly business performance reporting was considered by the Committee and feedback was provided to the Cabinet. The Committee also monitored the Authority's regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000(RIPA) policy and activity.

Crime and Disorder matters

Sections 19 and 20 of the Police and Justice Act 2006 together with the Crime and Disorder (Overview and Scrutiny) Regulations 2009 came into force on the 1 October 2009.

They require the Council to have in place:

- A ‘crime and disorder scrutiny committee’ with the role of scrutinising the work of the Ceredigion Community Safety Partnership and its constituent bodies (the Council, Dyfed Powys Police, the Dyfed Powys Police Authority, the Mid and West Wales Fire and Rescue Service, the Mid and West Wales Fire and Rescue Authority, and the Hywel Dda Health Board which are the responsible authorities) in respect of their community safety functions,

- A procedure for the overview and scrutiny committee and the partnership and its constituent bodies to deal with councillor calls for action (dealing with community safety matters) from Councillors.

The Council’s existing Overview and Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee undertook the responsibilities for crime and disorder matters.

Crime and Disorder Matters and the work of the Ceredigion Community Safety Partnership

Community Safety Partnerships were originally created by the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 to develop and implement strategies to reduce crime and disorder. The aim of the Ceredigion Partnership is to ‘work with individuals, organisations and communities to build a safe, just and tolerant society for those who live and work in and who visit Ceredigion’. In addition to representatives of the responsible authorities, the Partnership also includes representatives of the Ceredigion Youth Offending Service, the Dyfed-Powys Probation Trust, the Local Public Health Team, Ceredigion Association of Voluntary Organisations, Aberystwyth University, the Substance Misuse Commissioning Coordinator and the Community Safety Manager.

<u>Key Issues considered in 2012/13</u>

The Community Safety and Civil Contingencies Manager presented the Community Safety Strategic Assessment 2012-13 to the Committee. This included:

- The purpose of the assessment
- Progress review and key findings
- Public consultation
- Priority recommendations for 2012
- Legislation and related developments

Corporate Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee

The Corporate Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee met on seven occasions during the municipal year 2012/2013.

Key Issues considered in 2012/13

Consideration was given at the beginning of the municipal year to the report on the Development of Overview and Scrutiny Forward Work Programmes 2012/13. The Forward Work Programme was monitored and updated at each Committee meeting as a standing item on each agenda.

A performance update report on the Collection of Council Tax and Business Rates were presented to the Committee following the previous work of the committee in this area. This included considering the impacts the Welfare Reform would have. A task and finish group on Welfare Reform was established. The progress of the group was reported to the Committee during the year. A report was produced by the task and finish group providing a breakdown of the situation in the County, with an analysis of data; with the second part providing the predicted impact of the reforms on the County. The work of the task and finish group proceeded into 2013/14.

The committee continued to monitor the implementation of job evaluation and equal pay, and agreed to receive a further report on job evaluation following the outcome of appeals.

A task and finish group was established to review the Council's response to the North Ceredigion flooding emergency. The ongoing work of the group proceeded into 2013/14.

A performance update report was provided on sickness absences which had positively improved from previous years. The annual maintenance of council buildings was also considered by the Committee.

The review of the provision of Local District Offices in Ceredigion was considered by the Committee in the context of the proposals for identifying efficiencies as part of the 2013-14 budget; prior to being presented to Cabinet. The Committee made a recommendation to make amendments to the proposal for the local district office at Adpar.

The Committee considered the budget being recommended by Cabinet for 2013/14.

A presentation on the Ffynnon Performance Management System and the Overview and Scrutiny reporting requirements was made to the Committee. It was agreed that

training on Ffynnon would be provided to Members in small groups or on an individual basis.

The ICT Action Plans that arose following the WAO were considered by the Committee in relation to:

- Technology Review Feedback August 2011
- Information Management Review Feedback February 2012
- WAO National Report on Use of Technology to support Improvement and Efficiency in Local Government.

The Freedom of Information requirements under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 was presented to the Committee by the Head of Legal, Human Resources and Democratic Services. Several Members were of the opinion that the Council should have a Disclosure Log similar to the one on the Welsh Government website. The Head of Service reported that this was an option which had been discussed by an all Wales Officers Group. Members stated that this would alleviate several enquires in relation to similar requests however the resource issue in setting up such a log was also acknowledged. It was recommended that there should be a single point of contact for FOI issues. This option would be considered during the implementation of transformation.

Healthier Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee

The Healthier Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee met on ten occasions during the municipal year 2012/2013.

Key Issues considered in 2012/13

Consideration was given at the beginning of the municipal year to the report on the Development of Overview and Scrutiny Forward Work Programmes 2012/13. The Forward Work Programme was monitored and updated at each Committee meeting as a standing item on each agenda.

The sudden closure of Afallon Ward, Bronglais Hospital was considered by the Committee with representatives of Hywel Dda Health Board invited to the meeting to provide clarification on the following:

- the reasons for the sudden closure of the ward and the lack of notice
- the steps being taken to address the current staffing problem
- any advice issued to the County Council Social Services Department in respect of mental health referrals and assessments and place of safety arrangements.

A representative from the Ambulance service was also in attendance to outline the position following the Health Board's decision. The Chairman provided the Committee with a report on behalf of the Police.

The Members of the Committee expressed serious concerns about:

- the lack of notice given by the Health Board before closing the Ward, especially with its partners such as the Council's social Services Department and the police, and the resulting adverse effect on the referral and assessment of patients
- patients in this area of the County not being provided with the proper level of care
- the possibility that the staffing recruitment difficulties could be the result of the uncertainty about the future status and level of services to be provided at the Hospital.

In conclusion, the Members of the Committee impressed upon the Health Board representatives the urgency to resolve the staffing problem and to re-open the Ward in order to provide the proper level of care to patients in the affected area. Further

information was provided by Hywel Dda Health Board on the job vacancies advertised within the Mental Health Directorate in Ceredigion during 2011/12.

The Committee also considered Domiciliary Care within the County.

The Committee considered the feasibility study into the integration of Canolfan Meugan Learning Disability Community Support Base with Yr Hafod Older Persons Day Service, Cardigan. The Members of the Committee visited Canolfan Meugan and Yr Hafod prior to considering the feasibility study. Evidence was gathered from representatives of Cardigan Town Council, Age Concern Wales Ceredigion, Mencap, and the All Wales Forum of Parents and Carers/Ceredigion Forum. The recommendations made were as follows:

> i) not to support the recommendation contained in the Report of 16 July that the services currently being offered at Canolfan Meugan be offered from Yr Hafod Day Centre as the Committee was of the opinion that providing services to both clients with learning difficulties and older people at the day centre was not compatible and would have an adverse effect on the quality of the service being provided to both sets of clients;
>
> ii) in order to allay the fears of the Committee as to the health and safety implications for both the service users and staff, to seek urgent confirmation of the current condition of the Canolfan Meugan building by the Director of Highways, Property and Works, and advice as to whether and when it should be vacated;
>
> iii) to request an independent survey of the building in order to clarify whether it is possible to renovate, and the cost of those renovations, or whether it needs demolishing, and the cost of providing a replacement like-for-like facility; and
>
> iv) to continue to provide a discrete service to clients with learning disabilities in a replacement building or at Coleg Ceredigion or the former primary school building at Blaenporth; and, depending on the outcome of the information received from the Director of Highways, Property and Works as outlined in iii), that temporary accommodation be provided at the former Blaenporth school building, if need be.

Following the consultation events the Committee considered the report on alternative sites for the provision of services previously provided at Canolfan Meugan, Cardigan. The following recommendations were made to Cabinet:

- Support option 2 to re-build Canolfan Meugan on the same site with additional facilities at the estimated costs provided.

- Support the temporary re-location of the provision of services previously provided at Canolfan Meugan from the Guildhall to Yr Hafod Day Centre, for the period up to completion of the re-building of the new Canolfan Meugan.

The Committee considered the Information and Consultation Strategy for Carers 2012-15. The comments made by the Committee were fed into the consultation process. Members particularly felt that they would benefit from receiving training on this matter to assist them in dealing with cases in their wards as part of their representational role. The Carer e-learning package was completed by the Members.

The Local Safeguarding Children Multi Agency Management Report and the Independent Reviewing Service Report was considered by the Committee. Recommendations were made to improve the presentation of the reports and further information was presented to the Committee as requested.

The Committee also considered the budget being recommended by Cabinet for 2013/14, including the report on the Social Services Budget Performance 2012/13. The Committee recommended to Cabinet that in view of the continuing budgetary pressures faced by the Department, that the £600k funding temporarily allocated to the Social Services budget for 2012/13 should be permanently vired (i.e. transferred) from the Finance Corporate budget to the Social Services budget.

A task and finish group of the Committee was established to examine the animal health and welfare service. A recommendation was made to the Cabinet for the inclusion of a growth sum of £23k in the Department's budget for 2013-14 to offset the reduction in WG funding and safeguard the current level of service being provided; and that the level of the fees being charged be reviewed to ensure that the true cost of undertaking inspections is covered.

The Committee was updated on the Central Wales Social Services Collaboration with Powys County Council. It was resolved:

i) to agree to the Cabinet recommendation and to take forward the workforce development and commissioning and procurement work with Powys County Council; acknowledging the Final Business Case and the possible cost savings and avoidance for the Council by being part of this collaborative work;

ii) to agree to support the Final Business Case

iii) to note the Concept Paper prepared as the basis of collaborative working in social services in the mid and west Wales area, to include Ceredigion,

Powys, Carmarthenshire and Pembrokeshire Councils, and to continue to contribute to this process; and

iv) to note the decision of Powys County Council's Cabinet regarding the post of Director of Social Services for that Council.

A special meeting was held to consider the adulterated prepared beef products following the national horsemeat scandal. The Committee gave their attention to two aspects, namely the integrity of the Council's catering meat contract and the inspection and enforcement role of the Council in ensuring food safety. The Committee agreed:

i) to note that, following receipt of the information provided by the Officers at the meeting, the Committee was satisfied with the current terms of the meat contract and that the catering service had taken all possible steps to confirm the origin of the fresh meat being supplied and that the terms of the contact were being met;

ii) again, following receipt of the information provided by the Officers at the meeting, the Committee was satisfied with the current level of inspection of food premises being undertaken by the Officers but sought assurances that sufficient resources were available to meet statutory requirements;

iii) a press release be issued outlining the information presented at this meeting, being an up-date on the action taken by officers of the Council in response to the matter;

iv) to recommend to the Thriving Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee that a joint task and finish group be established in order to review in detail the current contracts for foodstuffs and to consider any possible improvements that could be introduced in time for the next round of tenders; and

v) to note the action taken by the Officers with regard to food sampling and to await the results of its food sampling programme within the next five working days and that a report be presented to the next meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee so that Members can be kept appraised of matters affecting the Council, local residents and businesses operating in the County.

The independent review of the day centre provision at Aberystwyth was considered by the Committee prior to reporting to Cabinet. The Branch Secretary of UNISON was present to convey the views of the day centre staff. Representatives of 'Save

Park Avenue Day Centre' also attended the meeting to raise their concerns with the Committee. The Committee Members also undertook a visit to the new day centre to view the facilities and speak to service users.

In the context of recommendation 6 of the Report, namely:

'Within the change agenda required by Sustainable Social Services and the Social Services and Well-being Bill, strategic debate be undertaken as to the needs of the future generation of Older People for day support, together with the services and solutions to meet these. This debate should build on recent research, maximising the contribution of the voluntary sector and faith communities and utilising mainstream locality based community facilities'

It was recommended that the Committee play a full part in the proposed debate, and that Officers make a presentation to a future meeting of the Committee at the appropriate time.

Learning Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee

The Learning Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee met on eight occasions during the municipal year 2012/2013.

Key Issues considered in 2012/13

Consideration was given at the beginning of the municipal year to the report on the Development of Overview and Scrutiny Forward Work Programmes 2012/13. The Forward Work Programme was monitored and updated at each Committee meeting as a standing item on each agenda.

Themed workstreams were established for raising awareness, training purposes and for identifying aspects which require further scrutiny. The workstreams comprise of four members from the Learning Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee and the Chairman would attend and contribute to all four. The workstreams provided feedback to the main Committee during the year. They are:

- Standards and Schools
- Wellbeing and Vulnerable Pupils
- Adult Education
- Modernising the Infrastructure.

The Committee considered school organisation in Ceredigion following the review of Education Strategies by Mr Alun Morgan, who had been commissioned to review the Council's policies relating to primary and secondary education following the May elections.

Following consideration of the recommendations contained in the report the Committee made the following recommendations to Cabinet:

- The Committee were in agreement with the first recommendation of the report to 'Ensure that there is a pro-active approach to managing change and development in light of economic, demographic and educational circumstances'.
- The Committee felt that point 2 'Reduce the current number of primary schools' and 'Continue to avoid a 'one-size' fits all settlement and take careful account of local circumstances and context' should be considered together.

- The Committee agreed with the recommendation to ‘Continue to explore options for sustainable educational provision in Tregaron’.
- The Committee were of the view that the figure used in the recommendation to ‘Instigate a review, along the lines specified in the Authority’s policy document, where numbers are fewer than ninety pupils’ was too high. The Committee proposed that the wording of the current policy be used: consult and encourage schools that fall below fifty pupils to work in partnership with another. This should lead to reducing the number of schools where heads have a teaching commitment.
- The Committee disagreed with the recommendation to move to close any school where numbers fall below thirty pupils. The figure should remain at twenty pupils unless there are exceptional circumstances.

Following feedback from the Wellbeing and Vulnerable Pupils workstream to the Committee on the post ENGAGE evaluation the Committee examined the benefits for sustaining the programme and the implications if the programme is not sustained.

The key benefits for sustaining the programme include:

- Higher rates of employment;
- Lower Youth Offending rates;
- Maintain school exclusion and attendance performance;
- Skills/qualifications to compete;
- Lower out of County Care placements;
- Increased number of apprenticeships.
- The key implications if the programme is not sustained include:
- Increase in out of county care (just 2 individuals will cost approx. £600,000 a year);
- Increase in crime and need for secure placements (2 individuals will cost £10,000 a week);
- Additional costs attributed unemployment (1 person £97,000 over a lifetime);
- Non achievement of direct Ceredigion County Council Improvement plan objectives and departmental plans.

An example of Engage direct impact:

- 47% decrease in 16-18 year old NEET (2011-12)

Engage supports disadvantaged young people to compete in the local economy, and to reduce the outward migration of our young people, increasing the workforce, employer opportunities and GDP of Ceredigion.

Following an examination of the evidence by the Committee the financial options were considered. It was agreed to recommend the following to Cabinet:

100% CCC Corporate Growth bid of £456,649 to meet the cost of programme delivery.

Primary and Secondary Surplus places was considered by the modernising the infrastructure workstream followed by the main Committee. Discussions took place on the benefits of removing mobile classrooms and utilising existing space in order to help achieve a reduction in the number of surplus places. The Committee recommended that Cabinet Members attend a workshop with officers from the Education department.

The Committee received a presentation on the School Council Self-Assessment, and the School Based Counselling Service Report for 2011-12.

The Committee also considered the budget being recommended by Cabinet for 2013/14.

The Children and Young People's Plan (CYPP) and Child Poverty Strategy 2011-14 Mid Cycle Review was considered by the Committee including questioning of the targets which had been fully met, partially met, and those areas not being met.

The adult education workstream made recommendations through the Committee to Cabinet which were accepted on the Rehab contract.

The Cabinet decision to approve the policy for educational exchange visits was called-in by the Committee. The reasoning for calling-in the decision were as follows:

- The matter should have been the subject of consideration by this committee and members had not been allowed the opportunity to debate the matter prior to its referral to the Cabinet for decision

- The Cabinet Report itself was not detailed enough and unclear as to the scope of the policy

- The scope of the policy in the context of the WG guidance and the approach taken by other Councils was unclear
- No evidence had been produced of any child subjected to danger in the past whilst on a school visit.

Members welcomed the opportunity of receiving further clarification on certain matters and addition information. It was agreed not to refer the matter back to Cabinet.

Following previous work done by the workstreams the Committee considered Elective Home Education, including the current strategy being followed, and the legislative position. With regard to Ceredigion, some 136 children were known to the Authority as receiving elective home education, which was the highest County in Wales and were being supported in accordance with the strategy. Members expressed surprise that there were such limited powers available to the Authority to monitor the education being received by these children. Concern was expressed that the Authority could not, as a matter of course, regularly monitor a child's wellbeing and development. A letter of concern was sent to the Minister of Education and Skills.

Thriving Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee

The Thriving Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee met on eight occasions during the municipal year 2012/2013.

Key Issues considered in 2012/13

Consideration was given at the beginning of the municipal year to the report on the Development of Overview and Scrutiny Forward Work Programmes 2012/13. The Forward Work Programme was monitored and updated at each Committee meeting as a standing item on each agenda.

The Committee considered the Planning Enforcement Charter and suggested certain amendments. The Committee recommended to Cabinet that one extra Enforcement Officer is employed and that appropriate provision be made in the 2013/14 and future years budgets. The position should then be reviewed after a year to ascertain whether an administrative assistant is also required. It was also recommended that the data processes within the Department be reviewed. A task and finish group was set up to carry out a customer survey of those using the service from a sample of 20 cases.

The Committee considered the support for local businesses and the local economy. This included an overview of the Ceredigion economy, the current departmental establishment and budget, the priorities for business support, economic development and regeneration in the Joint Programme of Work. In light of this work where it was concluded that the first two years are the most difficult for new businesses the Committee received an update on the revaluation of the national Non Domestic Rates (NNDR). Members highlighted that a large proportion of existing businesses in Ceredigion received a significant increase in the rates during the revaluation in 2010 which raised concern that this would affect their future viability and staffing levels, which would have a detrimental effect on the local economy.

The Committee made the following recommendation to Cabinet:

Cabinet write on behalf of the Council to Welsh Government:

- to support a revaluation of the National Non Domestic Rates in 2015; and
- recommend introducing a relief from NNDR for new businesses up to £20,000 of 100% for the first year and 50% for the second year.

The proposed Speed Limit Review of A, B & C Class County Roads was considered by the Committee, including the proposed 'Method Statement' for undertaking the review.

Fee Income received by Planning and Building Control Services was considered by the Committee. The Committee examined the changes and recognised that it does not mean that there is less work, but an increased percentage of non-fee earning which is why the target income set for building control is required to be reviewed. The Committee were concerned that the quality of service being received by residents from the private building control inspectors was not always of an acceptable standard.

Following consideration of the evidence provided to the Committee the following recommendations were made to Cabinet:

- That no changes are made with regard to the Development Control income target subject to existing equalisation mechanisms being maintained.
- That the income target set for Building Control is reviewed so that the budget better reflects the changing circumstances post 2010.
- That Cabinet write to the Welsh Government raising concerns with the quality and consistency of work provided by the private sector, and ask for consideration to be given to monitoring and regulating services so that the quality of work is assured and that private and public sectors trade from a similar starting point.

The Committee considered the budget being recommended by Cabinet for 2013/14. There was also a call-in of the Cabinet decision to adopt the proposed car parking charges for 2013-14.

The Chairman of the Local Access Forum presented to the Committee the work of the forum including its statutory role. The following issues were raised:

- countryside access is a key element of the tourism product in Ceredigion and there was a need to ensure that there was a need for better communication between the Forum and the Council on tourism matters.
- funding issues and the implications of securing grant funding for rights of way and access projects (which limited the scope of the Council to determine how it's rights of way priorities are set)

- the need to pursue and resolve matters relating to the Cambrian Mountains Exemplar Project and the need to ensure greater input by highways officers.

The procurement procedure of the Council was considered by the Committee following previous work of the Economic Development Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

The conclusions of the task and finish group established to review the current meat procurement contract was reported to the Committee. The six recommendations made by the task and finish group were made to the Council's Procurement Group for consideration when preparing the next contract for the supply of meat to the Council.

Lisa Saycell
Scrutiny Support Officer
December 2013