Ceredigion County Council

Overview and Scrutiny

Annual Report 2013/14

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 Resources
- 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 seven occasions during the municipal year 2013/2014.

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.

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 2013/14 was considered by the Committee prior to being presented to Cabinet and Council.

The Committee considered the development of the Overview and Scrutiny Forward Work Programmes for 2013/14. 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 to, and following public engagement on the document proposals.

Consideration was given to the Regional Shared Apprenticeship Initiative. The Committee agreeing to recommend to Cabinet:

(i) to agree in principle that the Council participates directly as a participating client by contributing £2,500 in year 1 and £5,000 in subsequent years and that the funding agreement should be reviewed after 2 years;

(ii) to authorise Officers to confirm this participation once a formal approach has been made;

(iii) to instruct Officers to identify the required funding; and (iv)to authorise appropriate attendance at the Scheme launch.

SWWRSA Ltd (Cyfle) attended a Committee meeting to provide information on the apprenticeship scheme.

The Committee also monitored the Authority's regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000(RIPA) policy and activity.

The Committee continued to monitor the Ceredigion Safeguarding Children and Vulnerable Adults Action Plan on a regular basis.

Consideration was given to the Asbestos Management Policy. Following due consideration, the Committee agreed to recommend that Cabinet accepts and endorses the policy.

The Committee received quarterly updates in relation to a project to build a 3-19 school in Llandysul.

Consideration was given to implementation of an Employee Handbook which the Committee agreed to recommend to Cabinet.

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 and Crime Panel, 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.

Key Issues considered

The Community Safety and Civil Contingencies Manager presented the Community Safety Strategic Assessment 2013-14 to the Committee and also provided regular updates in relation to Community Safety. As a result of this, members identified that the post of ASB Coordinator faced an uncertain future funding position. The Committee Chair wrote to the Crime Commissioner highlighting the importance of this role.

Mr Christopher Salmon, Police and Crime Commissioner Dyfed-Powys attended a Committee meeting to give a self-introduction.

Corporate Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee

The Corporate Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee met on eight occasions during the municipal year 2013/2014.

Key Issues considered.

Consideration was given at the beginning of the municipal year to the development of the Overview and Scrutiny Forward Work Programme 2013/14. The Forward Work Programme was monitored and updated at each Committee meeting as a standing agenda item.

A performance update report on the collection of Council Tax and Business Rates was presented to the Committee, as this is an area which is regularly monitored. This included considering the Welfare Reform impact. The Welfare Reform task and finish group established during 2012/2013 reporting period continued to meet and regularly reported its progress to the Committee, and subsequently to Cabinet. This area of work continued to be monitored with the Chairperson attending the Welfare Reform Officers Group. Regular feedback was then provided to the Committee.

The committee received an update in relation to the Transformation programme, a review of the December 2010 timetable, which included a brief assessment of progress against what was set out in the overarching project plan. Following discussion, it was agreed that the Scrutiny Chairs should attend the Council's quarterly performance meetings in the future.

A task and finish group was established to review the Council's response to the Ceredigion flooding emergency event of June 2012. Members of the Task and Finish Group visited the Talybont Flood Group on Thursday 10 April 2014. The purpose of this meeting was to hold informal discussions on the flooding after-effects, providing local residents with an opportunity to talk about the events surrounding, during and post flooding, and to highlight any concerns/worries that may still be relevant. The Talybont Flood Group praised the County Council for its continuous efforts during the clear-up process. It was agreed that some residents would document their experience of the flood event for inclusion in the report to Cabinet, once the Task and Finish Group has fully researched this matter. Members of the Task and Finish Group also held a public meeting early May 2014 at Canolfan Rheidol, Aberystwyth. It was pleasing to report that many residents attended that evening. The Fire Authority and County Council Officers were praised for their continuous efforts during the clear-up process. The Group intends to continue visiting other areas in Ceredigion prior to compiling a report with recommendations to Cabinet.

A performance update report was provided on sickness absence which had positively improved from previous years. The Committee continues to receive regular Sickness Absence reports.

The Committee considered the budget recommended by Cabinet for 2014/2015 and also considered a call in on a Budget Cabinet decision for the following reason:

"We believe that there is insufficient detail within the supporting papers to make an informed decision on the impact that service reduction would have on the residents of Ceredigion as a result of the proposed budget savings."

Concern was also raised in relation to the lack of transparency in the process and in the public engagement undertaken to discuss the proposals.

The Committee considered each budget saving proposal (40) in turn and were provided with the background by the relevant Strategic Director, who also answered the Committee's questions.

Particular concern was raised by the Committee in relation to the following budget saving proposals:
4. 5 - Highway Winter Maintenance
4.14 - Mid Wales Entertainment Circuit
4.23 - Adult Social Care – London House relocation of day services
4.24 - Adult Social Care – Age Concern
4.28 - Swimming Pools
4.31 - Libraries.

In relation to proposal 4.23 - Adult Social Care – London House relocation of day services, it was clarified by the Strategic Director that this was a proposal to explore opportunities for re-locating current in-house services within alternative, existing settings. It was agreed that the Healthier Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee would be able to consider this further in future.

Following a discussion in relation to proposal 4.28 – Swimming Pools, there was consensus that this should be withdrawn from consideration for the time being to allow legal issues to be resolved.

Emphasis was placed on the need for greater Overview and Scrutiny Committee involvement in the budget saving proposals for 2015/16 and future years. It was suggested that a Members' Workshop be held early in the new financial year to consider the process for budget setting, which should include greater public and stakeholder engagement. One suggestion was that the Chairs of the Overview and Scrutiny Committees should be present at meetings where possible savings were being considered.

Following consideration of the evidence provided to the Committee the following recommendation was made to Cabinet:

That the Joint Report of the Leadership Group on proposed budgetary savings for 2014/15 is referred back to Cabinet with a recommendation that the proposed savings be considered by the relevant Scrutiny Committees.

A report was presented in relation to the proposed Corporate Human Resources System. The Committee agreed that the new system will be more effective when in place. It was agreed that a progress report would be presented in future.

The Corporate Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee considered the Strategic Equality Plan Annual Report and the Committee suggested further development opportunities as follows:

• To review membership and terms of reference of the internal equality working group to reflect the new service structure following transformation;

• To review the Integrated Impact Assessment toolkit and mainstream into the Council's policies and procedures;

• The collection and recording of workforce data will be improved following the introduction of the new payroll system;

• To review and develop new equality objectives as and when required to reflect current issues;

• Deliver further equality and impact assessment training to both staff and elected Council Members.

A concern was raised by a member of the public to a Community Council which in turn was referred to the Committee, in relation to answering correspondence, in-particular confirmation of receipt of e-mails. As a result, it was agreed that a Customer Service Charter would be compiled and presented to the Committee prior to its implementation.

At its meeting on 8th May 2014 the Corporate Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee considered the Procurement Strategy – 2014/2018, and made the following observations:

1. Local Contractors regularly express concern that the tendering process is complicated and as a result favour larger Companies that employ people who have specific knowledge and expertise in this area;

2. That a large proportion of smaller sized Contractors do not have the technical experience to use the E-procurement system, this needs to be considered in the future;

3. That producing a guide to assist Contractors with completing the tendering process would be helpful.

The Committee agreed to consider the tendering process in detail at a future meeting and invite a representative from 'Menter and Busnes' who assist businesses with the electronic tendering process.

The Medium Term Financial Strategy 2014/15 onwards was reported. It was agreed that the Overview and Scrutiny Chairs should focus on their specific priority areas for the coming year. It was proposed to Cabinet that the words 'Scrutiny Chairs' should be added to the sentence in 2.3:- 'Regular workshops are held throughout the year between Cabinet Members, ***Scrutiny Chairs*** and Officers of the Leadership Group'. It was also proposed that the Committee review the Medium Term Financial Plan on a regular basis.

Healthier Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee

The Healthier Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee met on nine occasions during the municipal year 2013/2014.

Key Issues considered.

Consideration was given at the beginning of the municipal year to the development of the Overview and Scrutiny Forward Work Programme 2013/14. The Forward Work Programme was monitored and updated at each Committee meeting as a standing agenda item.

In 2012 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, which included Members of the Committee visiting Canolfan Meugan and Yr Hafod prior to its consideration. The Committee did not support this recommendation as follows:

1. 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.

Following consultation events to consider alternative sites for provision of Canolfan Meugan the Committee considered a further report and made the following recommendations to Cabinet:

- Support the option 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 Members have during this reporting period visited Yr Hafod and spoken with Service Users. The following observations were made to Cabinet following their visit in December 2013:

- There have been teething problems with the multi-functional use with several complaints/issues having been raised by Services Users and Staff in the past. These matters appear to have been resolved.
- The two groups of Service Users appear to have established good relationships and are jointly participating in activities wherever possible.

- The space available in Yr Hafod Day Centre is confined and an extension would be beneficial to provide a larger kitchen facility and a quiet rest room. It would be helpful to be able to compare the cost of an extension to Yr Hafod Day Centre with the likely build cost for a like-for-like Canolfan Meugan replacement.
- On the basis that Cabinet accepts the observations submitted, concern was raised over the future use of the current Canolfan Meugan site and the likely cost of demolishing the existing building. It was suggested that an appropriate future use might be a residential development providing units for independent living.
- It was noted that the Council is under no statutory obligation to provide the services currently being provided from Yr Hafod Day Centre.

This arrangement of multi-functional use of older persons and learning disability users at Yr Hafod Day Centre is currently ongoing and the Committee will continue to monitor the situation.

The Committee have made several visits during the previous reporting year, which include the Morlais Ward at Glangwili Hospital following the sudden closure of Afallon Ward, Bronglais. In July 2012 Hywel Dda Health Board announced the sudden closure of the Afallon Ward at Bronglais Hospital which provided Mental Health Services for the County. Hywel Dda Health Board representatives attended meetings in order to address Councillors' concerns. The Committee however continue to monitor the situation and during this reporting period again visited the Morlais Ward at Glangwili Hospital. Following the visit, Members gave positive feedback in relation to the service to the remaining Committee Members.

The Strategic Director for Care, Protection and Lifestyle presented the Social Services Overview report for 2012/13 and the concerns raised by the Director within the report were noted by Committee Members.

The Common Allocation Policy and Local Lettings Policy were also considered.
Following due Consideration, the Healthier Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee agreed to recommend that Cabinet:

Accepts and endorses the policy, subject to the following suggestions being incorporated prior to implementation:

- The Committee considers that the Policy requires clarification with regards to the reference to 'mental health'. A clear definition would be helpful to provide clarity that it is not the individual's mental health status that is being assessed, rather the effect on the individual's mental health resulting from the quality of the housing accommodation.
- The policy relating to 'employment in Ceredigion' should also cater for those people who live in Ceredigion but may not work in the County.
- The reference to 'close family' needs to be clearly defined to avoid subjective assessment of who would qualify as a close family member.

- Concerns were raised regarding omission of any reference to the older Person and where they would fit into the policy. Officers advised that the older person's housing needs would be targeted through the Older Persons Housing Register that would sit alongside the proposed Common Allocation Policy. This would be aligned with the Affordable Housing Register and an Accessible Housing Register. The Committee would like to see cross reference to this in the Common Allocation Policy.
- Clarification is needed on the use of the term locality and how the cascade effect would work.

The Healthier Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee met on 21 October to consider the Draft Housing Strategy for Ceredigion, feedback from the consultation, proposed amendments, and aims and objectives for the Strategic Housing Partnership. Following detailed consideration of the papers provided to the Committee it was agreed to support the recommendation to Cabinet, that Cabinet approve the amendments that have been suggested to the draft Local Housing Strategy, and approve the aims and objectives of the Strategic Housing Partnership, as the mechanism to take forward the strategy into the implementation and monitoring phase. The Committee emphasised that the Ceredigion Housing Partnership should comprise of local partners.

Changes to dog control arrangements were considered by the Committee (Dog Control Orders) with the following recommendations were made to Cabinet:

1. The adoption of a new regime for the control of dogs in Ceredigion utilising, on a phased introductory basis, the provisions contained within the Environmental Protection Act 1990 (as amended by the clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act 2005); 2. That the Head of Lifestyle Services, in consultation with the Head of Legal, HR and Democratic Services, is requested to prepare detailed proposals for consideration and approval by Members that will enable the appropriate control arrangements to be in place for the County; and 3. That £35k is made available to fund the cost of the project to support the production and adoption of the new dog control provisions within the County.

A Task and Finish group was set up during the previous reporting period to scrutinise Trading Standards. The group re-considered this matter and a report was presented to Cabinet outlining their conclusions as follows:

It was acknowledged that Trading Standards is an important and valuable service to the Council. Whilst the nature of the service and the manner in which it is delivered has changed since local government reorganisation in 1996, the Committee concluded that the Trading Standards Service is historically underfunded. The officers operate to exceptional standards, but under the current arrangements it is unlikely that the Council is able to supply a service that meets the expectations of the

public. It is a service that is not always visible to the public but is crucial and comes to the surface when incidents arise. It is essential that the public safety net is preserved.

The Committee noted the effect on the management of the service due to the retirement of officers within the Licencing Service which resulted in the diversion of the Consumer Services Manager to cover this area. There has also been a reduction in capacity of the team as a result of the temporary secondment of a Trading Standards Officer to a complex police led investigation. Whilst these have created temporary pressures on the Consumer Services Section, it highlights the difficulties that are encountered in trying to deliver services with insufficient officer capacity.

The group questioned the under performance during 2012/13 and were satisfied with the explanations provided by the officers of the factors, including sickness absences and vacant posts following retirement and voluntary departures. Staffing levels within the Consumer Services Section are now in accordance with the establishment.

The Committee continues to receive the Independent Reviewing Service report on a quarterly basis.

The Committee also considered the budget being recommended by Cabinet for 2013/14, and reported to Cabinet that the Budget recommendation was not approved for the following reason:

1. The Committee does not support the proposed Meals at Home rise from £3.50 to £5.00 per meal and recommends that any increase is limited to £4.00 per meal. Cabinet agreed to continue with the proposed rise.

The Cylch Caron project which is an innovative scheme to bring together a range of services in a focal point for the Tregaron and surrounding rural areas was reported to the Committee. Following consideration, it was agreed to establish a work stream consisting of five members from the Committee, to be involved in the development of the Outline Business Case and to report back to the main committee as and when appropriate.

As part of the review of the Council's future delivery of Leisure Services in Ceredigion, Members of the Healthier Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee visited the County's Leisure Centres and Swimming Pools on the 28th January 2014.

The Council's six Leisure Centres are located in Aberaeron, Cardigan, Llandysul, Lampeter, Tregaron and Aberystwyth. There are six Swimming Pools in the County. Three are operated directly by the Local Authority, including Lampeter, Tregaron and Aberystwyth. The other three Swimming pools currently receive funding support from the Local Authority, but are not controlled by the Authority. They are Aberaeron, Llandysul and Cardigan.

The provision and operation of the Leisure Centres and Swimming Pools have close links with the local Schools due to their locations, with the majority being located on School Campuses. Within the Communities of Ceredigion, although leisure provision is not a statutory function for the Authority, the service is highly valued by its Citizens. Ceredigion County Council is facing unprecedented financial challenges over the coming years, resulting in the need for a detailed review of the leisure service provision and future funding options needs to be considered.

At its meeting on the 5th June 2014 the Healthier Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee considered the development of the Ceredigion Sport and Recreational Activity Strategy 2014-2020. Following consideration of the report, the following observations were made to Cabinet:

- Members of the Committee undertook a tour of the Council run leisure facilities and community operated swimming pools in the County and a report was produced outlining their findings. The Committee Members were concerned that the work already undertaken in respect of Leisure review would not be taken into consideration by the Cabinet led Task and Finish Group;
- It was suggested that due to the recent press coverage in relation to leisure facilities in the County, that the Staff involved should be updated on the situation in order to alleviate any concerns that they may have;
- It was noted that Community Councils are to be involved in any future public engagement on this matter;
- It was suggested that SACRE (Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education) be involved in any future engagement sessions;
- Leisure is identified as a major contributing factor to keeping people healthy and this need to be considered in the development of this strategy.

The Committee recommend to Cabinet that:

- Work previously undertaken by the Healthier Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee would be taken into consideration by the Cabinet Task and Finish Group;
- A future report is presented to the Scrutiny Committee in order to keep the Members updated on progress.

It was agreed that the Healthier Communities Chairman and Vice-chairman are involved in a task and finish group established by Cabinet to review such facilities.

The draft Service Strategy for older people was presented which resulted in a task and finish group being established. This group met on several occasions to obtain views from outside bodies on the strategy, which included a representative from Hywel Dda Health Board, Age Cymru and input in relation to Carers and their views on the Strategy. This work will continue into the next reporting period.

The Local Safeguarding Children's Board quarterly reports continued to be presented to the Committee. A concern was raised that there was a staffing issue in relation to child protection minute capacity, however, reassurance was provided that this matter would be given attention in the near future. Following due consideration, the Committee agreed to note the following:

- There has been an increase in police attendance figures at Child Protection meetings during quarter 3;
- The percentage of mothers not willing to cooperate with professionals is 21%, however, the actual number of mothers is only 4;
- There is still a staffing issue in relation to Child Protection minute taking capacity.

The Learning Disability Strategy was considered, point 3 within the report, states: **some service areas will be de-commissioned in order to invest in new service areas that better meets the needs of service users and achieve better value.** The Committee recommended to Cabinet that new service areas should be in place prior to others being de-commissioned.

Hywel Dda Health Board provided regular updates to Committee Members and this will continue into the next reporting period.

Learning Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee

The Learning Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee met on ten occasions during the municipal year 2013/2014.

Key Issues considered

Consideration was given at the beginning of the municipal year to the report on the Development of Overview and Scrutiny Forward Work Programmes 2013/14. The Forward Work Programme was monitored and updated at each Committee meeting as a standing item on each agenda.

The Committee considered the budget being recommended by Cabinet for 2014/15.

The Committee considered and supported the Educating Children and Young People with Special Educational Needs: Strategy, Policy and Procedures prior to the documents going to Cabinet.

The Head of Learning Services provided an overview of the Education and Community Services Self Evaluation 2012-13. The risks contained in Appendix 5 were considered in detail. Members questioned why improving key stage 4 was identified as a risk. The Head of Learning Services explained that the internal assessments were being marked too hard, which has been addressed through getting the department together to go through the assessments with CBAC. The biggest risk to the department has been identified as the number of surplus places in Secondary Schools within the County. Failure to restructure 14-19 education provision may result in reduced learning opportunities for Ceredigion pupils. The workstreams looked at the respective sections of the self-evaluation in detail prior to reporting back to the Committee.

The Committee considered the valid call-in of the decision of the Cabinet of 11 June 2013 in relation to the 2015/16 Three Year Capital Programme. A detailed explanation in relation to the financial profile for the Llandysul 3-19 School in the revised Programme was given. It was noted that the amount allocated in the Three Year Capital Programme had been reduced from £32m to £29.5m. The Strategic Director for Learning and Partnerships outlined in detail the history of the development of the school as outlined in the 'Planning Secondary Education in Ceredigion 2020' Strategy and the 'Welsh Assembly Government- 21st Century Schools Programme- Strategic Outline Plan'. Members welcomed the opportunity of receiving clarification of certain matters and the additional information given at the meeting and the opportunity to debate the matter in detail.

It was resolved at the meeting:

(i) to accept Cabinet minute C25 in relation to the 2013/14 to 2015/16 Three Year Capital Programme; and

(ii) that the minutes of the Project Board be presented to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on a regular basis until the project has been completed.

The workstreams provided an opportunity for Members to feed their views into the Estyn Self-Evaluation which was then considered by the main Committee. These views had helped form officer's views in coming to judgements in various parts of the document.

The future of education provision in Tregaron area was considered by the Committee including the reasons for change within education, including:-

- Ceredigion County Council had been considering the way forward for education in the county for some time and the reasons for change were both educational and financial
- Effective delivery of curriculum
- The costs per pupil were amongst the highest in Wales
- There were significant numbers of empty spaces, among the highest in Wales and the number of pupils in some schools are decreasing
- There were significant shortcomings in the suitability of the buildings

Representatives of the school governors of Tregaron Primary, Llanddewi Brefi Primary and Tregaron Secondary school addressed the meeting to express their views on this proposal. The Chair of Tregaron Primary stated that they did not oppose the proposal, however, the chair for Tregaron Secondary and Llanddewi Brefi requested that the Authority reconsider and outlined their reasoning.

The Committee were content that the community engagement process was fair, transparent and equitable and recommended that the Cabinet progress to the formal consultation stage.

The School Review Panel Decisions were considered by the Committee during the municipal year. Empty school places must be reduced from 25% to 17% by 2015 and a significant percentage of the cost per pupils is spent in maintaining old school buildings and not on the pupils themselves. Comments relating to process had been received from the public by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and a series of statements were noted. The Committee gathered evidence from a representative of the school governors of each individual school.

The future delivery of education services across Ceredigion and Powys was considered by the Committee following a report being presented to Powys and Ceredigion County Council's Cabinet. The report contained the national challenges

to deliver quality education services and the joint working that had been undertaken to date.

School Improvement Plans and the matrix which confirmed the standard of each school were considered by the Committee which included anonymised date templates.

The Cabinet decisions on the Future provision of Dihewyd and Trefilan Primary Schools and Rhos Helyg were called-in by the Committee.

The Families First Coordinator provided an update on the progress of the Play Sufficiency Action Plan. The Committee received feedback on the OGC Gateway Review of Ceredigion 21st Century School Programme. The revised NEET Strategy and Action Plan was considered by the Committee.

Consideration was given to the Report of the Head of Learning Services upon the recent Estyn Inspection Report in relation to the quality of Education services provided within the authority. It was reported that the overall judgement of the service was Excellent. Members congratulated the Officers and in particular the Strategic Director on the delivery of the service and its achievements. It was reported that there was one recommendation from Estyn as follows:-
R1 Ensure that the areas for improvement identified in the authority's self evaluation report are addressed effectively along with those noted in the report.

The Committee considered the 14-19 funding, Members looked at the collaboration work between the Welsh Government and ERW 14-19 co-ordinators to ensure clarity of all developments within the RNDP and the Post 16 Planning and Funding Framework and supported the strategic direction of Ceredigion within the region; the Committee were concerned on the delivery of the funding due to the funding formula that exists.

Improving the Language Centre Service provision in the South of the County was considered by the Committee including the proposal to improve the provision for Key Stage 2 latecomers in South Ceredigion by setting up a language centre on Cardigan Primary School Campus.

The Welsh Education Strategic Plan 2014-17 was presented to the Committee together with the current performance and target for each outcome.

Workstreams

The Learning Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee established four workstreams for raising awareness, training purposes and for identifying aspects which require further scrutiny as part of the forward work programme planning process. The workstreams comprise four members from the Learning Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee and the Chairman would attend and contribute to all four.

Figure 1 outlines the four workstreams and the topics identified requiring consideration:

Standards and schools	Wellbeing and Vulnerable Pupils	Adult Education	Modernising the Infrastructure
Literacy	Inclusion	HCT	ICT
Numeracy	SEN	Adult Learning	Curriculum
Welsh	Attendance		Population and pre-school places
School Performance	Behaviour		
Services	NEETS		
More able and talented	Youth		
	Poverty		
	Safeguarding		

Figure 1

Thriving Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee

The Thriving Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee met on eight occasions during the municipal year 2013/2014.

Key Issues considered.

Consideration was given at the beginning of the municipal year to the report on the Development of Overview and Scrutiny Forward Work Programmes 2013/14. The Forward Work Programme was monitored and updated at each Committee meeting as a standing item on each agenda.

The progress of the Bwcabus project and the challenges of rural transport were considered by the Committee.

The Committee considered the preparation and progress of the Ceredigion Economic Regeneration Strategy which would identify key recommendations on how to promote and guide the regeneration of the economy over the next 10 years. The Committee agreed the role of the strategy in identifying future actions and project delivery for all stakeholders in the County and the role of the Sustainable Futures LSB Executive Group in taking these forward.

An update on the first meeting of the North and Mid Wales Trunk Road Agency was provided to the Committee.

The winter maintenance matrix which had previously been reviewed by the Committee was further discussed by the Committee and by a cross party working group.

Better train services from Aberystwyth Rail Station were discussed by the Committee following the consultation commissioned by the Minister for Economy, Science and Transport.

The Carbon Management Plan 2012/13 – 2016/17[1] was considered by the Committee. Feedback was provided and the Plan would be reviewed annually.

A review of the Green Waste Collection Service was undertaken. Various options to the service were considered including the service paying for itself, re-useable garden waste bags, ending the service, the possibility that fly tipping could increase and the use of more black bin bags resulting in escalated landfill costs if the service ends, a breakdown of service requests from each area and the need to promote more use of compost bins.

[1] http://www.ceredigion.gov.uk/utilities/action/act_download.cfm?mediaid=49754&langtoken=eng

The task and finish group considered comparisons for the cost of the bag, with the service cost, and predicted sales as a result. It was accepted that an increase in the cost of the bags is likely to lead to a decrease in sales and a balance would be required to be achieved as not to have a detrimental impact on the service provision.

Officers provided examples of alternative ways of operating the service which are used in other Councils, for example through a yearly fee. Members requested that the alternative methods of operating the service are taken into consideration during the upcoming review.

The task and finish group emphasised the importance of the alternative options that are available to the public through home composting and the Household and Recycling Sites. It was felt that greater use of these sites should be made and that the public weren't always aware of them. The compost bins are available to purchase from the Council at cost price and these should be advertised more widely. However, it was appreciated that composting is not reflected within the recycling target that the Council is required to meet which will lead to the Council being fined if the target is not met.

The Task and Finish Group were concerned that this is a subsidised service within the significant budget savings that the authority has to make. The group was informed that a kerbside collection review is being undertaken and the findings of the review will be available in August. In light of this the task and finish group proposed to make a recommendation to Cabinet that the Officers consider the views that have been expressed in preparation for the review and that the Thriving Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee has an opportunity to consider the review prior to reporting to Cabinet.

The 2012-13 Parking Services Annual Report was considered by the Committee. Following on from this a report was prepared on the feasibility of Civil Parking Enforcement Officers being authorised to fine the public who drop litter on the streets. The task and finish group raised concerns regarding rubbish on the highway that is being thrown from cars. The task and finish group proposed that a recommendation is made to Cabinet to explore the possibility of running a pilot for a month within Ceredigion with qualified officers from an authority in Wales or from a private company that specialise in enviro-crime. The task and finish group also proposed that the Civil Parking Enforcement Annual Report for 2013/14 is presented to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in October. Officers agreed to incorporate the concerns raised by the group to the draft press release 'Protect and Respect Parking People'.

Consideration was given to the budget for the 2014-15 financial year.

The Committee reviewed the response to the January Storm Event and agreed to receive a further report in relation to the recovery phase once repair work had been completed, including lessons learnt.

The Committee undertook a site visit to Food Centre Wales. Concerns were raised in relation to the Centre being heavily reliant on external funding. Head of Economic and Community Development Services informed the Committee that he was in the process of completing a robust business plan for future funding. The Committee discussed the various options that may be available to the Food Centre in the future. It was agreed that regular updates would be provided to the Committee.

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Corporate Performance Management Panel

The Chairman and Vice Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committees attend the Corporate Performance Management Panel.

This provides a forum where members of the CPM panel 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.

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