Ceredigion County Council

Overview and Scrutiny

Annual Report 2014/15

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 2014/2015.

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 considered the development of the Overview and Scrutiny Forward Work Programmes for 2014/15. The role of the Co-ordinating Committee is to oversee the Forward Work Programmes, ensuring that they are:

- relevant to corporate priorities
- focused on the key areas
- coordinated to avoid duplication
- realistic and manageable within the resources available
- that they will add value.

Each Committee agreed to consider their individual Forward Work Programmes in accordance with the guidance.

The draft Improvement Plan for 2014/15 was considered by the Committee prior to Cabinet and Council consideration.

The Monitoring Officer on the 29th May 2014 presented a report regarding a proposed cap on indemnities granted to Members defending misconduct proceedings. It was noted that Ceredigion County Council is one of the last Councils in Wales to consider this.

During discussions, a Councillor expressed concern in relation to the cost involved for individuals and public services where indemnities are offered. It was noted that costs involved can be very high and that perspective insurers will only provide indemnities in rare circumstances**.** Another concern was raised regarding the term *reasonable cost*s. It was felt that some insurers would see this as an opportunity. The Committee was assured that each case is considered by the Ethics and Standards Committee on an individual basis.

The Committee recommended to Cabinet that the following be included in the report:

- that there is presumption against the use of legal representation unless it is a serious case; and

- that the discretion is secured for the Ethics and Standards Committee.

A report on the Central and South West Wales Shared Legal Services' progress was presented to Committee during the meeting held on the 12th June 2014. The shared legal service has been active for a number of years, sharing best practice, training opportunities and expertise as well as collaborating to achieve value for money in procurement of external services. The Committee agreed to note the progress made and to also note the examples of collaborative work in relation to this project.

The draft Single Integrated Plan was considered by the Committee prior to, and following public engagement on the document proposals.

A report on the Service Savings Options for 2015/2016 was considered by the Committee on the 16th October 2014 and 22nd January 2015 with a report presented to Cabinet outlining its recommendations.

An update report on the South West Wales Regional Shared Apprenticeship Scheme was received on the 16th October 2014. Following discussion it was agreed that further information should be sought from Cyfle and that a fuller report be presented in future to provide a wider context on the availability of training and apprenticeships in the County.

A further report was considered in February 2015. This included information on a new Welsh Government consultation document, delivering the policy statement on skills 'Aligning the apprenticeship model to the needs of the Welsh economy'. It was agreed that efforts needed to be made to raise the apprenticeship profile in the rural communities of Wales. Committee Members agreed that this subject would be monitored in future.

Two representatives from the South West Wales Regional Shared Apprenticeship Scheme (SWWRSA) Ltd (Cyfle) attended a Committee meeting to provide information on the apprenticeship scheme.

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

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

The Wales Audit Office Study on Local Authority arrangements to support safeguarding of children including whistleblowing was received on the 11th December 2014. The Audit Committee at its meeting on 17 October 2014 made a request for the Coordinating Overview and Scrutiny Committee to consider the proposed responses made by the Welsh Audit Office, and to then report its findings to the Audit Committee. This was with a view to providing assurance that the Council is responding appropriately to the issues and proposals identified. Following due consideration, Committee Members recommended that all Members attend level 2

Child Protection training, and that in future the Coordinating Overview and Scrutiny Committee receive half yearly reports in relation to Whistleblowing. It was agreed that all Members were satisfied with the arrangements that have, or are planned to be put in place, and that appropriate action has, or is being taken, to address these proposals.

The Chairman welcomed Carys Morgan, Equality and Language Policy Officer, to the Committee meeting dated 11th December 2014. Mrs Morgan presented a report in relation to the Ceredigion Local Service Board Bilingual Future Report Cards and the Ceredigion Local Service Board Welsh Language Strategy.

The Committee agreed to receive the Local Service Board Executive Group Bilingual Future report cards 6b Economy & Place and 9d Independent Living in relation to achieving the targets set in the Single Integrated Plan 'Ceredigion for All', This agreement was subject to an amendment to report card 6B welsh version RAG status. The Committee also agreed to note the Ceredigion Local Service Board Welsh Language Strategy and Action Plan 2015-2020.

The Committee received quarterly updates regarding progress on a project to build a 3-19 school in Llandysul which will continue into the next reporting period.

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.

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

Key Issues considered

The Community Safety and Civil Contingencies Manager presented the Community Safety Strategic Assessment 2014-15 to the Committee and also provided regular updates in relation to Community Safety. As a result of this, members identified that future funding of the post of Anti Social Behaviour (ASB) Coordinator is uncertain. The Committee Chair wrote to the Crime Commissioner highlighting the importance of this role and concerns regarding funding uncertainty. An explanatory reply was received.

Corporate Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee

The Corporate Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee met on seven separate occasions during the municipal year 2014/2015.

Key Issues considered.

Consideration was given at the beginning of the municipal year to the development of the Overview and Scrutiny Forward Work Programme 2014/15. The Forward Work Programme was monitored and updated at each Committee meeting as a standing agenda item.

Committee Members received an update on the 14th July 2014 on Council owned vacant and under-performing property and land. As part of the property asset management process and the Estates and Valuation Business Plan, monthly reports are presented to the Council's Capital Expenditure Working Group on vacant and under-performing property and land. The Committee Chairman is a Member of the Working Group and has therefore received monthly updates.

Also, at its meeting on 14th July 2014, the Council's Corporate Resources and Overview Scrutiny Committee considered the performance and role of the Council's County Farm Portfolio and agreed that the county farms report would be considered further following a Welsh Government sponsored review of Welsh County Farms as an invest to save project. An update on the review progress was provided to the Committee on 3rd November 2014. The review reached the conclusion that as savings had not been identified the project would not continue. Any future collaborative project work on County Farm Estates across Wales would need to be funded by Authorities rather than via the Welsh Government invest to save fund. Officers were unable to identify any benefits of Ceredigion continuing with further collaboration on this basis. A copy of a report on this matter considered by the WLGA Rural Forum on 20th March 2015 was circulated to Committee Members who were asked whether they wished to consider further the role and performance of Ceredigion's County Farm Estate. Committee Members agreed that no further work was necessary at present.

At the same meeting Committee Members considered a report in relation to the performance of the Council's Corporate Estate with feedback presented to Cabinet as follows:

It was agreed to support the decision of Cabinet's 1st July 2014 meeting, as follows:

- To proactively offer for sale the properties outlined in Appendix 1 of the report;

- Officers to identify opportunities to utilise capital receipts realised through the sale of Appendix 1 properties to generate income and/or added value for the Authority and to report back to Cabinet with proposals; and
- The Council to retain the Properties outlined in Appendix 2 of the report (subject to the provisions of the Leasehold Reform Act of 1967 and any subsequent amendments) apart from exceptions which may be brought to Cabinet.

This was agreed in order that the council benefit from the appreciating value of the Corporate Estate and the increasing income derived therefrom.

A report was presented to the Corporate Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee during the previous reporting period by the Head of ICT and Customer Service on Community Council correspondence. It was agreed at this meeting to develop a new Customer Charter that would give the citizen and Members of Ceredigion guidance on the level of service they should expect.

At its 2nd October 2014 meeting, Committee members considered the draft Charter and made the following recommendations to Cabinet:

- It was noted that there have been instances when a confirmation letter has been sent in response to an email enquiry even though the enquiry has been answered via email. The Committee suggest a response is sent in the same format as it was received, i.e. if e-mail, then an acknowledgment e-mail is sent and so on;

- In response to any enquiry, that a confirmation acknowledgment is sent out in every case within 7 working days and where possible any enquiry is dealt with within 21 days; and, if this is not possible, that an explanation is forwarded;

- To consider the set-up of a dedicated team to deal with all incoming correspondence as part of the “Risk and Reward” exercise.

- To replace the words ‘If things go wrong’, with ‘The Authority welcomes comments on its service whether they be positive or negative’;

- that all Staff are reminded that they must carry their Identification card with them on all Ceredigion County Council visits, and that consideration should be given to re-issuing business cards to staff ;

- A Councillor reported that in some cases responding to an enquiry received in the Welsh language is an issue and that all staff should be reminded of the Council’s Welsh Language Policy;

- Members request that the requirements within the Customer Service Charter are regularly monitored and that Staff receive feedback during their appraisals.

The Corporate Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee agreed to recommend that the Cabinet accept the Customer Service Charter subject to consideration of the above. The Corporate Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee Members requested that an annual monitoring report is presented to them at future meetings.

At the same meeting, an explanation on the tendering process to include evidence on statistical information in relation to local contractors was received. During discussions, the following suggestions were raised:

- that additional wording be added to the contracts for work undertaken in relation to Disabled Facilities Grants work etc. such as “advanced notice be given to the residents of the dwelling of when work would commence”
- to investigate further the possibility of Town and Community Councils being part of the Tendering Process.

The Corporate Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee agreed to note the Tendering Process subject to consideration of the above.

A representative from Menter a Busnes also attended the meeting to provide information on how they assist businesses with the electronic tendering process. Committee Members found this very helpful.

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 during the previous reporting period and agreed to visit other areas affected. The purpose of these meetings 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. Members of the Task and Finish Group held a public meeting early May 2014 at Canolfan Rheidol, Aberystwyth. The Fire Authority and County Council Officers were praised for their continuous efforts during the clear-up process. The Chairman and Overview and Scrutiny Support Officer met with a resident from Clarach and a written report was received in relation to the flooding in the Parish of Trefeurig.

The Group also held a public meeting at Cardigan as its residents have also been affected by major flooding in the past.

A Special Committee meeting was convened on the 19th January 2015 to consider reports produced following each visit, which, noted the points raised, together with its relevant recommendations. Those agreed recommendations were then presented to Cabinet on the 12th May 2015. The Task and Finish Group will visit any other Communities who have experienced flooding during the next reporting period.

A report on the Service Savings Options for 2015/2016 was considered by the Committee with a report to Cabinet outlining its recommendations.

On the 29th January 2015, a report was presented on the preparation of the balanced budget for 2015/2016. Following due consideration, the Committee Chairman presented a report to Cabinet agreeing its recommendations.

Members of the Corporate Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee requested a report on the impact to residents where libraries have closed or have been taken over by the Community to be presented at the 19th March 2015 meeting. On the 26th November 2013, Cabinet approved the budget cuts necessary to meet the savings required to set a balanced budget for 2014/2015. An element of savings identified related to a restructure of the management level of the library service, a reduction of mobile library vans from five to four and closure of Tregaron and New Quay Libraries, with a replacement mobile service.

New Quay Council expressed an interest in running a library service in the town using volunteers and after some discussion a Service Level Agreement between the Town and County Council was developed and agreed.

Tregaron Library forms part of the Secondary School and is located in the old school building across the road from the main school. At the time of the proposal to close the library, the school asked for it to remain open for their needs and pupils would either be escorted over or a teacher would take books form the library for schools use. After a public meeting in Tregaron, it was agreed to maintain the library service on reduced hours until an alternative solution can be agreed by the Town Council and the Authority.

The Committee Chairman invited a representative from New Quay Town Council to the 19th March 2015 meeting to provide feedback on the Town Council's experience of providing the volunteer library service. The voluntary service started on the 1st June 2014 and after some technical issues, the service was successfully delivered by volunteers. It was agreed that this matter would be monitored on a yearly basis and that a Town Council representative would again be invited to contribute to the Committee.

At the same meeting the Corporate Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee considered the Review of Manual Handling in Care Project and the Healthier Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee considered the item at its meeting dated 23rd March 2015. Over recent years it has become common to provide two carers for standard care, particularly care within the bed or when using mobile hoists. This often was most appropriate as there was not suitable equipment available to reduce the risks sufficiently for a single carer to safely deliver care.

A report was then presented to Cabinet recommending that:

- Committee Members visit the Ceredigion Independent Living Centre to receive a demonstration of the new equipment;

- The Risk Assessment form used to identify possible future single carer care packages should also ensure that there is no other reason for the individual to not receive a lone visit. This is in order to safeguard lone workers. It was however noted that the Single Carer Policy was also being drafted to include adequate provisions to safeguard lone workers;

- It was pleasing to note that Care Workers are eager to train and be upskilled. Members felt that it is very important to retain current staff, and recommend that their salaries are reviewed in the near future;

The current Disciplinary Policy was reviewed in line with the requirement of the Human Resources Business Plan, to ensure Policy complies with good practice and that it is fit for purpose. It was considered that the policy needed to be strengthened in some areas especially surrounding guidance to Managers. The Chairman following discussions during the 19th March 2015 Committee meeting made the following recommendation to Cabinet that:

- A warning should be included in Appendix 5 referring to the Social Media Policy;

- To note and accept the policy subject to consideration of the above.

At its meeting on 20th April 2015 the Committee considered the Strategic Equality Plan Performance Report and agreed to recommend that the Cabinet:

- approve the revised equality objectives;

- endorse the Monitoring Report ; and;

- approve the Strategic Equality Plan Performance Report subject to consideration of the points raised above.

It was noted that the report demonstrates progress with the implementation of the Strategic Equality Plan.

Healthier Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee

The Healthier Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee met on twelve separate occasions during 2014/2015.

Key Issues considered.

Consideration was given at the beginning of the municipal year to the development of the Overview and Scrutiny Forward Work Programme 2014/15. The Forward Work Programme was monitored and updated at each Committee meeting as a standing agenda item.

The Committee received the Health Social Care and Wellbeing executive group report on the 5th June 2014 and agreed the report's recommendation to note the ongoing work involved in achieving an improvement in health, social care and wellbeing services, and, to acknowledge the risks presented in the continued availability of those services. The Committee's support of this recommendation was subject to the recommendation taking into consideration the available Council Budget.

A report on the development of the Ceredigion Sport and Recreational Activity Strategy 2014-2020 was presented and considered by Committee Members also at its 5th June 2014 meeting. Members agreed that the Chairman would report to Cabinet as follows:

- 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.

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

Members also considered the 'Taxi & Private Hire Licensing Policy, Fitness Criteria for Drivers & Operators' at the same meeting. The Chairman recommended that Cabinet accept the policy subject to suggestions in relation to the wording in the document.

At its meeting of the 15th July 2014, Members considered the Declaration of an Additional Housing Multiple Occupation (HMO) Licensing Scheme for Ceredigion

and the effect that this is having on residents. Members agreed to support the delivery of interventions within Ceredigion to improve standards and management arrangements of rented accommodation.

The Chairman requested a report on the increase in the number of Looked after Children in the County as identified on Ceredigion County Council's risk register. This was also received on the 15th July 2014. Following discussions, Members were satisfied that the Looked after Children service is doing its utmost to alleviate this concern.

The Mid and West Wales Consortium Integrated Family Support Services (IFSS) Annual Report 2013/14 was presented to the Committee on the 15 July 2014. Members were assured that this new delivery model works well for families in Ceredigion and the region has acknowledged the need for an increase in such a service in the County as an essential preventative service. The Committee Chairman presented a report to Cabinet on the 29th July 2014 making the following recommendation:

- Request that Welsh Government continues to provide grant funding to support this valuable service, and for Welsh Government to take into account the measured key achievements and positive outcomes reached, which support the need for such a service within rural populations.

The end of year report of the 3 Counties Carers Measure Partnership Regional Work was presented to Committee on the 18th September 2014 by Peter Llewellyn, Assistant Director, Hywel Dda Health Board with feedback made to Cabinet as follows:

- The Healthier Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee agreed to note the end of year report of the 3 Counties Carers Measure Partnership Regional work and to note the specific achievements and progress made within the County.

The Healthier Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee met on 12 September 2014 to consider the Mobile Homes Act 2013. Following consideration, the Committee made the following recommendations:

- That officers should consult with residents and park home owners of existing sites in relation to the fees proposed, however, the committee does not consider that the proposed 21 day consultation period suggested is adequate and recommend a 28 day consultation period. The committee also recommends that an explanation is provided on why the proposed fees and charges for Mobile Homes are being implemented. It should be made clear that this is not an opportunity for the Authority to make financial gain;

- That the Disclosure Scotland checks should be undertaken in all cases, and that this should be made clear in the policy;

- Committee Members raised concerns as to whether the Authority has sufficient resources to accommodate this additional workload;

- Committee Members agreed with the recommendation to delegate authority to the Head of Lifestyle Services to administer and enforce the provisions contained within the Mobile Homes (Wales) Act 2013 as appropriate;

- It is requested that the Healthier Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee receive annual update reports.

A report on the Service Savings Options for 2015/2016 was considered by the Committee and a report presented to Cabinet outlining its recommendations.

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

The arrangement of multi-functional use of older persons and learning disability users at Yr Hafod Day Centre is currently ongoing and some Committee Members visited the Day Centre on the 29th October 2014. The purpose of this visit was to ascertain service user's views on the proposed future plans for the centre. A report was presented to Cabinet on the 2 December 2014 which identified that:

- The majority of service users appeared content with the proposed plans, although some did express their concern and disappointment that funding previously allocated for an extension to Yr Hafod is no longer available. Both the Learning Disabilities and Older People are happy with the shared services and praised the staff that care for them.

The Private Sector Housing Financial Assistance Policy was presented at the Committee's November meeting. The Committee Members agreed to recommend to Cabinet the adoption of the Private Sector Housing Grants and Loans Policy subject to the following conditions:

- to consider raising the £10k threshold;

- to emphasise rural communities in the Policy to a greater extent; and

- a further report be presented in future for the Committee to consider its impact.

A Fly Tipping Task and Finish Group was established, comprising five Committee Members. The group, following investigation, concluded that they recognize that fly tipping in Ceredigion is a small scale problem in comparison with other authorities throughout Wales.

On the 5th December 2014, Committee Members considered a report for Ceredigion County Council to engage and consult on a range of options for the future of

Residential Care Homes in Ceredigion based on a Review of Residential Care prepared by Housing Research Ltd for Ceredigion County Council. It was agreed that the Committee would be involved in this process and that members would be kept informed at all times. Reports have been presented throughout this reporting period and will continue into the next.

Angela Williams, Regional Director for Care Social Services Inspectorate Wales (CSSIW), attended the meeting on the 23rd January 2015 to present the CSSIW Evaluation Report. Members were pleased that Angela Williams had attended and noted the good work undertaken.

Five members from the Committee have been involved during this reporting period in the development of the Cylch Caron Outline Business Case and report back to the main committee as and when appropriate and will continue to do so into the next.

The draft Service Strategy for older people was presented during the previous reporting year (March 2014) which resulted in a task and finish group being established. This group continued to meet on several occasions during the 2014/15 reporting period to obtain views from outside bodies on the strategy, including representatives from Hywel Dda Health Board and Age Cymru. Input was also sought from carers regarding their views on the Strategy. The Committee Chairman presented a report to Cabinet recommending that:

- All Councillors attend a briefing session on The Social Services Well-being (Wales) Bill in the near future;

- It was agreed to accept the draft Service Strategy for Older People subject to the policies within the Social Services and Wellbeing Bill being taken into account. On this basis, it is recommended that Cabinet adopts the Strategy.

- The Task and Finish Group also considered that the Strategy would be better supported by a universal Ceredigion County Council Contact Centre.

- The Social Services Well-being (Wales) Bill will affect many services within the Local Authority and it is essential that all services are aware of its implications. The Task and Finish Group recommend that Heads of Services familiarise themselves with the content of the Bill.

Members' workshops have been held throughout the reporting period in relation to The Social Services Well-being (Wales) Bill.

A report was referred from the Audit Committee to the Healthier Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee; namely the Environmental Health Services under growing pressure and considered at its meeting of the 12th February 2015. It was agreed that a task and finish group be established to explore this service in

Ceredigion and with the groups findings being referred back to the Audit Committee in due course. The group will continue with this work into the next reporting period.

The Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Licensing Overarching Policy was presented also at the February meeting resulting in concerns being referred to Cabinet, including:

- Concern was raised when referring to Child restraints. The policy notes that when a child restraint is not available, the child may travel unrestrained. Clarification is sought as to whether this accords with relevant legislation?

- Concern was also raised regarding the issuing of hackney carriages licenses by other authorities to individuals residing in their area but operating in Ceredigion and vice versa. The Committee would like to see this issue dealt with consistently by individual Authorities.

Following due Consideration, the Healthier Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee agreed: To note and accept the policy subject to consideration and clarity of the above points.

The Protection of Vulnerable Adults (POVA) team presented at the 12th February 2015 meeting due to concerns over the rising number of POVA referrals recorded on Ceredigion County Council's risk register. The Healthier Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee agreed to note the update on safeguarding of vulnerable activity, and endorsed the staff restructuring implemented on the 2nd February 2015. It was agreed that the Committee receive annual reports from the Adult Protection team in future.

An interesting presentation on the 23rd March 2015 was given by Ryan Evans from the Illegal Money Lending Unit in relation to Loan Sharks. Mr Evans explained the typical characteristics displayed by loan sharks. He advised Committee Members that the Wales Illegal Money Lending Unit have started raising awareness amongst primary and secondary school children. Information booklets have been produced for this purpose.

Following due Consideration, the Healthier Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee recommended that:

- Cabinet support the Illegal Money Lending Unit's initiative to raise awareness amongst Primary and Secondary Schools and that Ceredigion Primary and Secondary Schools are encouraged to participate;

- Ceredigion's Learning Services ensure that all primary and secondary schools receive the information that is available and that Teachers are supported to include the resources as part of their teaching role;

- the Learning Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee also support this initiative.

Cabinet agreed to endorse the Committee's recommendations.

During the same meeting, Committee Members received a presentation in relation to the Trading Standards fight against Mass Marketing Fraud. Following due consideration, the Healthier Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee agreed to recommend to Cabinet that:

- The Trading Standards Team hold a conference/s to educate Ceredigion's relevant partners and Third Party Organisations and raise awareness of the issue;

- The Trading Standards team implements the proposed partnership working to tackle and reduce the number of scams in the future.

The Committee considered the Review of Manual Handling in Care Project on the 23rd March 2015 when it was agreed that a visit to the Ceredigion Independent Living Centre during the next reporting period would be helpful.

A report was presented to Cabinet recommending that:

- Committee Members visit the Ceredigion Independent Living Centre to receive a demonstration of the new equipment;

- The Risk Assessment form used to identify possible future single carer care packages should also ensure that there is no other reason for the individual to not receive a lone visit. This is in order to safeguard lone workers. It was however noted that the Single Carer Policy was also being drafted to include adequate provisions to safeguard lone workers;

- It was pleasing to note that Care Workers are eager to train and be upskilled. Members felt that it is very important to retain current staff, and recommend that their salaries are reviewed in the near future;

- It was pleasing to note that Care Workers are eager to train and be upskilled. Members felt that it is very important to retain current staff, and recommend that their salaries are reviewed in the near future.

On the 15th April 2015 Buddug Ward, Head of Families and Children, presented to the Committee, the Care and Social Inspectorate Wales report on the Inspection of Ceredigion County Council "Safeguarding and Care Planning of looked after Children and Care Leavers, who exhibit 'vulnerable or risky behaviours'. Members noted the excellent work undertaken by the Looked after Children team. Following consideration of the report, it was agreed that the Chairman brings to the Community Health Council's attention concerns noted in relation to the therapeutic needs of looked after children and care leavers.

The Protection of Vulnerable Adult Team returned to the Committee on the 15th April 2015 to advise Members of an Adult Safeguarding Model that has been produced. It was agreed that as this was a draft document, the Adult Protection Team would return to the Committee once the document had been finalised. Committee Members agreed to endorse the Adult Safeguarding Model. It was also agreed that it would be advisable for ALL Ceredigion County Council Councillors to receive training on the Protection of Vulnerable Adults protocol.

A representative from the Community Health Council attended the April 2015 meeting and gave a presentation regarding the work that they undertake. Committee Members proposed future partnership working and it was agreed that should a relevant topic to scrutinise arise, then a joint scrutiny workshop will be arranged.

Learning Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee

The Learning Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee met on seven occasions during the municipal year 2014/2015.

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

Consideration was given to the Report on the restructuring within Learning Services. It was proposed that the structure of Senior Managers be put in place to service the areas below:-

• Head of School Improvement

• Head of SEN Inclusion & Wellbeing

• Head of Youth Engagement & Continuing Education

• Head of Educational Infrastructure

The Report on the Ceredigion Children and Young People's Plan and Child Poverty Strategy 2011-14 was considered by the Committee. It was reported that the report outlined through its narrative and graphic content the improved outcomes for the children and young people of Ceredigion.

The Families First End of Year Report 2013/14 which outlined and updated Members on the progress of the Families First Programme in Ceredigion was considered by the Committee.

Consideration was given to the Report on the Teacher Centre - Information system for schools. It was reported that new developments in the Teacher Centre had let to upscaling and demand both regionally and nationally for the system. The Committee supported the ongoing development of the system in order to allow the lease of the system to other Authorities and/or Welsh Government; and the continued work with Welsh Government and partners to develop and expand the functionality, usage and storage solutions.

Consideration was given to the Report of the Head of Learning Services upon Free School Meals. The Computer Development Manager updated Members on the position in relation to the ongoing issues of eligible pupils not claiming free school

meals and the lack of cashless systems in Ceredigion schools as a contributory factor. All Members agreed that a cashless system would alleviate the stigma of free school meals especially in the secondary sector. Members and Officers were of the opinion that it was unacceptable for pupils receiving free school meals to be treated differently to their peers. It was therefore envisaged by the Computer Development Manager to create a system that would remove the stigma of free school meals and to ensure that eligible pupils for Free School Meals had no barriers in claiming their entitlement. It was agreed that Ceredigion IT system development team further pursue and develop a cashless system for payment of school meals.

The proposed budget savings proposals for 2015/16 within the remit of the Committee were considered. These included to review school taxi provision, and 16 Plus (Sixth Form / College) transport review – target savings 2015/16: £500,000; regional approach to Governor support – target savings 2015/16: £20,000; to review Cered arrangements (management) – target savings 2015/16: £11,000; reduce revenue Budget for Felinfach Campus – target savings 2015/16: £30,000; rationalisation of primary schools - part-year effect in 2015-16 – target savings 2015/16: £150,000. The Committee made recommendations to Cabinet on the proposals. The Committee considered the additional proposed savings options for 2015/16 relating to the Committee which was the review of post 16 education and further considered the budget being recommended by Cabinet for 2015/16.

The 2014 Pupil Outcomes were reported to the Committee. The information is presented annually to evaluate performance of schools and Learning Services. This information also assisted in discussing trends and ongoing challenges. The Committee agreed the strengths and areas for improvement which would form the basis of the ongoing work for the school improvement team.

The Committee considered the proposed changes to the School Review Policy. It was highlighted that each of Ceredigion's six catchment areas will be reviewed periodically; and the criteria for the selection and prioritisation of schools for reviews had been removed from the policy. The Committee recommended the revised changes to the School Review Policy to Cabinet and Council, with the following amendments:

1. that the Ceredigion Review Panel comprises the Chairman of the Learning Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee plus two Members;

2. the Membership of the Review Panel is politically balanced.

A bi-annual update on the Local Service Board Executive Group for Children and Young People was provided to the Committee. It was noted that four workstream groups have been established by the LSB Executive Group for Children and Young people. Consideration was given to the support cards in relation to the Supporting Families priority outcome within the Single Integrated Plan.

The Ceredigion Play Action Plan 2013/14 and also on the actions to be carried forward to the Play Action plan 2014/15 were considered by the Committee.

Consideration was given to the Partnership Agreement between the Local Authority and Schools for 2015-2018. Following discussion it was agreed that the Partnership Agreement between the Local Authority and Schools 2015-18 be recommended for Cabinet approval. It was noted that once approved by Cabinet each Governing Body of each school would need to approve the agreement in order for it to be in place from the 01 September 2015.

The review of educational provision in the Aberystwyth district was considered by the Committee. Mr Alun Morgan presented the recommendations included within the independent report he had undertaken.

The following was considered during the meeting:

(i) a review of the provision at Cwmpadarn Primary School and Llangynfelyn Primary School would be undertaken;

(ii) a review into the possibility of creating a 3 – 19 Welsh Medium school located on Ysgol Gymraeg and Ysgol Penweddig sites in order to strengthen the Welsh language provision within the Aberystwyth area would be undertaken;

(iii) ways and means to reduce the number of head teachers with more than 0.5 of a week teaching commitment would be sought;

(iv) consideration be given to create a Professional Learning Community between Llanfarian, Llangwyryfon and Llanfihangel y Creuddyn;

(v) engaging in continuous professional dialogue with all providers and take responsibility for the organisation, structure and provision of post 16 pre-vocational and vocational education in the Aberystwyth district; and

(vi) options of increasing Welsh medium provision in the Aberystwyth area

Consideration was given to the update report on the Flying Start Programme in Ceredigion. The Flying Start Manager reported that the report had been presented to the Committee to ensure that the Flying Start Team contributed to improving outcomes for families in the most deprived areas of the county.

The Ceredigion Play Action Plan 2015/16 was presented to the Committee. The plan was fit for purpose, achievable and complies with Welsh Government timetable as stated in the statutory guidelines. The report was recommended for Cabinet approval.

The Education Improvement Grant was considered by the Committee. An update on the current situation in relation to grant funding from the Welsh Government was

provided. For 2015-16, WG is rationalising the individual grants which include the School Effectiveness Grant, Minority Ethnic Achievement Grant, Welsh in Education grant and Foundation Phase grant, namely the Education Improvement Grant. A letter from the WG has been received by the ERW Consortium in relation to the award of funding for distribution to the 6 authorities. The new arrangements for the EIG and its implications for Ceredigion learners were noted. A progress report would be presented to the Committee in 6 months' time to include any concerns arising from other authorities in the ERW region.

Consideration was given to pupil attendance and the Code of Conduct for absence penalty notices. The code has been developed to set out measures to ensure consistency in the issuing of penalty notices in cases of unauthorised absence.

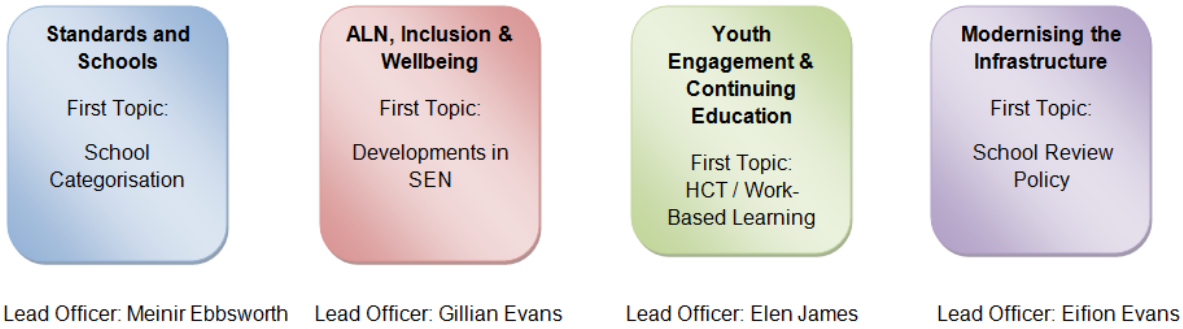
The WG Keeping Learners Safe document which provides guidance for local authorities and governing bodies to ensure that there are effective systems in place to support the creating and maintaining a safe learning environment for children and young people and to deal with child welfare concerns and take action to address them was considered.

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.

Consideration was given to the current workstreams and the proposed changes to align more closely with the new structure within Learning Services.

The new workstream structure was adjusted to incorporate the new structure



Thriving Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee

The Thriving Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee met on nine occasions during the municipal year 2014/2015.

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

Winter Maintenance for 2014/15 was considered by the Committee. Including the effects of the cut of £80,000 on the Service as part of the County Council's overall budget strategy. The background of the legal position of the Winter Service, the current level of service and the methods of how the routes to be pre-treated are chosen were considered. The route assessment methodology was refined following the decisions of the Winter Maintenance Review panel meetings held in 2013. The Committee considered three possible proposals to achieve these savings:

1. Rationalisation of the Winter Maintenance Fleet and pre-treating routes scoring +4 or above.

2. Rationalisation of the Winter Maintenance fleet and pre-treating routes scoring +6 or above plus one route to all schools.

3. Rationalisation of the Winter Maintenance Fleet and pre-treating routes scoring +4 or above plus link to bus depots.

Following consideration, the Committee recommended option 3 to the Cabinet.

Winter maintenance was revisited by the Committee again during the year. In order to achieve the savings of £80,000 in the 2014/15 Winter Maintenance budget, the following recommendations were made:

i. The main route to all bus depots that provide Public or School Transport are pre-treated and that the threshold score for all other roads to qualify for inclusion in the precautionary salting schedule for the 2014-2015 is set at a score of +4 or above.

ii. The winter maintenance gritter fleet and other ancillary plant and equipment are reduced as detailed in Table A of the report.

The Destination Management Plan a development from the Ceredigion Tourism Strategy was considered by the Committee. Monitoring the priority outcomes of the Destination Management Plan is based on the action plan.

The Chairman of the Ceredigion Local Access Forum delivered his annual update on the Local Access Forum which included the role and operation of the Forum, the contribution that countryside access makes to tourism in Ceredigion, the Ceredigion Rights of Way Improvement Plan, Volunteers and Public Rights of Way and Rights of Way budgets.

The Annual Review of the Carbon Management Plan and options for generating income through renewable energy were considered by the Committee including the progress and achievements of the Plan. A 7.4% reduction in CO^2 on the 2011/12 baseline was noted and this is on target to reduce by 15% by 2016/17. Case Studies and their success were highlighted and included property, street lighting improvements, fleet transport, business mileage and waste management. The Operation Energy rollout to schools is progressing well with a total of 24 schools participating in the project so far and the cooling system in place in Canolfan Rheidol is providing savings of £26.2k per annum and with a payback period of under two years. Further investment is planned to install solar panels at Penmorfa and Minaeron and the phase 2 of the renewable energy centre installation at Plascrug to feed into Ysgol Penweddig and the Plascrug Leisure Centre. The SBED Solar Collector Project at Ysgol Bro Pedr, in partnership with WEFO and TATA steel, is estimated to reduce annual CO^2 by 14.1 tonnes. Discussions are taking place in relation to development and ownership of wind turbines and the income the Council may derive from site rental to a Community Enterprise Company.

The kerbside collection review process following the implementation of the Waste Management Strategy 2014 – 2018 was considered by the Committee. It was noted that consultants from AMEC have been appointed by the Waste and Resources Action Programme to undertake the review under the Welsh Government's Collaborative Change Programme. The review will consider a number of different collection options. The Committee would provide further input when the conclusions for the review are known.

A report on the January 2014 storm events – recovery phase was presented to the Committee. The report included recommendations for future improvements. It was concluded that the Council's response was effectively delivered.

The Committee considered the Local Development Plan (LDP) Annual Monitoring Report 2013 -14 (AMR) following the first year of implementation prior to submission to the Welsh Government. It was noted that there have been no significant problems identified in relation to the implementation of the strategy; however, the report highlighted issues that could arise should policies and procedures not be adhered to.

The proposed budget savings proposals for 2015/16 within the remit of the Committee were considered. These included generating income by developing a Community Wind Turbine – target savings: £30,000; a service delivery model for provision of facilities on or around the prom in Aberystwyth e.g. bandstand, paddling

pool, crazy golf – target savings: £11,000; review lease provision of public conveniences on third party land – target savings: £7,000; service delivery model for the provision of flower beds – target savings: £40,000; school crossing patrol provision – target savings: £20,000; reduction on highway maintenance spend - target savings: £100,000; bus subsidy and / or review number of routes – target savings: £250,000; Country Cars provision – target savings: £10,000; provision of Tourist Information Centres - target savings: £60,000; collaborative opportunities for strategic housing and planning services – target savings: £20,000; variation of opening hours of Ceredigion Museum and staff restructure - target savings: £23,000; provision of children's playgrounds - target savings: £16,000 and the Food Centre Wales Horeb - target savings: £10,000.

The Committee considered the additional proposed savings options for 2015/16following the first tranche of savings. The additional proposed savings options considered by the Committee were savings due to fuel price reductions and further review of bus subsidy and/or review number of routes.

The application and enforcement of sustainable Building Standards was considered by the Committee. The report outlined the current requirement for the construction of new dwellings, following the withdrawal of planning policy requirements for compliance with the Code for Sustainable Homes. Concerns were raised in relation to whether private building control firms are regulated. Correspondence had been sent to the Minister to this effect.

The Committee considered the feasibility study on the Food Centre Wales at Horeb. The feasibility study, carried out by BIC Innovation, considered possible options for the Food Centre service provision in the future. BIC Innovation were briefed to explore future service provision on the basis that the Centre should not be dependent on County Council revenue funding. Among their key statements, the positive ones included that the Food Centre Wales is a good brand name and that it has a good reputation for quality and delivery. Some of the less positive key statements included the lack of strategic focus and the Centre had recently been poorly led and managed and was poorly marketed. The review included contact with other food centres in the UK, interviews with WG, clients, staff, client focus groups and potential partners. Many positive messages were received relating to good results, early stage development and technical support. The negative ones included that the Centre is not holistic enough, does not provide a clear route to market, no joined up approach, no website and a sense of isolation. There is a need to emphasise success more, to build up on the existing good reputation and to design a quality management system.

There was a call in of the Cabinet decision on fees and charges 2015/16 in respect of the increase of parking charges at Gloster Row. The local Member stated that the local residents residing nearby the car park deemed the rise in charges unfair,

particularly as it is prone to flooding and many of the residents are elderly and infirm or disabled. The Committee undertook a visit to the site as part of the call in. The Strategic Director for Sustainable Communities, noted that the increase in fees and charges at Gloster Row would bring the car park in line with other car park bands in order to be consistent across the county. It was noted that the original fees and charges imposed last year had been delayed due to the floods at Cardigan. There had been expenditure on the improvements at Gloster Row car park to improve standards and meet health and safety regulations. It was agreed to establish a task and finish group to carry out a more detailed piece of work on the car parking charging regime. The Committee recommended that Cabinet reconsider that the fees and charges at Gloster Row for 2015/16 remain at the same level as 2014/15.

Following the work the Committee had undertaken previously on the Food Centre Wales and the identified budgetary savings in relation to Catering the Committee requested a further report in order to scrutinise the proposal. It was noted that catering is currently subsidised by £2m and the target was set to reduce the subsidy significantly. The majority of catering is for primary school meals. Using the Centre for all catering was one of the options to be explored. However, having considered the resources, transportation costs and staff, the savings would be very marginal and it would entail great upheaval. Therefore, this option was deemed ineffective. Subsequently, a number of other measures are being looked into which includes reducing managerial costs, a review of menus and production costs and possible voluntary early retirements. Further savings may be generated from closing some primary school kitchens. Nearby school kitchens would then supply their meals. Also school staff would no longer receive free meals for carrying out lunchtime supervision and would be reimbursed financially.

Highways Maintenance as identified in the Corporate Risk Register was considered by the Committee. Issues were raised in relation to the maintenance of gullies and a further report was requested by the Committee. It was noted that the service undertakes a regular maintenance regime with the aim of emptying all gullies once a year and more often if there are problems. Surveys are undertaken of class 1 and 2 gullies but not all gullies are known. The basic budget for maintenance had not increased over the last 8 years. The service strives to respond to all complaints and concentrates on areas where the problems are worse. The Committee noted that Ceredigion roads were scored as the 4th from the bottom in Wales. However the service is performing as well as possible under the current budgetary constraints and the Association for Public Service Excellence (APSE) have commended Ceredigion as one of the most improved councils in relation to its highways. Staff were requested to improve the dispersal of mounds of debris left on verges following gulley cleaning. Officers were requested to raise the problem of wood chip debris left on roads at the next meeting with utility companies. The Committee also

recommended to Cabinet that the highway maintenance budget is protected as good road standards contribute to all the Council's improvement objectives.

Bridge Maintenance was scrutinised by the Committee following concerns raised in relation to value for money. It was noted that a daily rate contract is usually awarded to contractors to undertake maintenance work on bridges where the extent and the scale of the problem is unknown. This allows for flexibility for both the contractors and the Council. Daily rate contractors are closely supervised. Staff and contractors meet on site and agree the scope of work and number of days. The rate covers all use of machinery, materials costs and costs such as scaffolding and removing spoil etc. It was emphasised that bridge maintenance work is procured strictly in accordance with the Council's Contract Procedures. Contractors may apply to be on the list of tenderers and must demonstrate that they have the appropriate skills and qualifications or certificates. The performance of contractors is scored. Badly performing contractors can be removed from the Select List.

The Committee were presented with information on the ongoing work in relation to the Ceredigion Destination Management Plan. The Plan was produced jointly with other relevant organisations and launched in June 2014. The Plan is essential for drawing down funding for tourism in the county. Latest figures demonstrate that Ceredigion has 3 million visitors a year who spend 8.3 million days in the county which provides an income of £300 million and 5,700 jobs.

The Committee noted that no complaints have been received thus far following the Sunday closure of Tourist Information Centres in the county following the budget savings options decision. The Tourist Information Centre (TIC) in Aberaeron remained open on Sundays following an agreement with Aberaeron Town Council to fund Sunday opening. A request in relation to certain TIC being run by volunteers on Sundays was to be looked into. Income from charging 30 – 35% for the sale of local goods, such as arts and crafts, at the Aberaeron TIC had proved successful. A similar scheme is to take place in the Aberystwyth TIC following moving into new premises along with Ceredigion Museum. Members agreed that the Committee is committed to the strategic role of tourism in supporting the overall economy in Ceredigion and recommended to Cabinet that the current 2015/16 budget provision for tourism is protected and to consider increasing the budget when funds allow.

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.

Councillor Attendance

Attendance records for 2014/15 are available on the Coucillor individual pages on the Council website: http://www.ceredigion.gov.uk/English/Your-Council/Councillors-Committees/Councillors/Pages/default.aspx"

Lisa Evans, Standards and Scrutiny Officer
Dwynwen Jones, Overview and Scrutiny Support Officer