Ceredigion County Council

Overview and Scrutiny

Annual Report

2019/20

Introduction

WHAT IS OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY?

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

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

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

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

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

The Wales Audit Office (WAO) conducted a review in relation to 'Overview and Scrutiny – Fit for the Future?' during 2017/2018. This review explored with each of the 22 Councils in Wales how 'fit for the future' their scrutiny functions were. The WAO considered how councils were responding to current challenges for their scrutiny activity. These included the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and how councils were carrying out scrutiny of Public Service Boards (PSB's). As part of the review they also reviewed the progress that councils had made in addressing the Government of the earlier National Improvement Study 'Good Scrutiny Good Question?' (May 2014). The main findings were as follows:

“The Council recognises and values the importance of the overview and scrutiny function in scrutinising decision-making, but more could be done to extend the range of scrutiny methods used and to evaluate its impact.

- The Overview and Scrutiny function contributes well in scrutinising decision-making and the Council recognises and values its importance
- Scrutiny committees’ forward work programmes include appropriate issues, more could be done to extend further the range of scrutiny methods used and ensure it reviews progress made against audit and other regulatory and inspection body reports
- The Council has not regularly reviewed the effectiveness of its overview and scrutiny function, however, a review is now underway which will enable the Council to evaluate scrutiny impact and identify where it could improve.”

The WAO did not identify any statutory recommendations but identified 3 proposals for improvement i.e. their proposals for ways in which the Council could improve the effectiveness of its overview and scrutiny function to make it better placed to meet current and future challenges:

P1. Ensure that reports on progress to address internal audit and external regulatory, inspection and audit recommendations are considered for inclusion in overview and scrutiny forward work programmes

P2. Further develop scrutiny forward work programming to:

- Provide a clear rationale for topic selection
- Be more outcome focused; and
- Ensure that the method of scrutiny is best suited to the topic area and the outcome desired.

P3. Council should review the type of scrutiny support required to enable the scrutiny function to respond to future challenges.

A Management Response was completed and submitted to WAO, as shown below. Shown in red is an up to date account of action taken:

P1. Following consideration by Audit Committee, to ensure that the Chairs and Vice Chairs of the relevant Overview and Scrutiny Committee determine whether it is necessary for the internal audit and external regulatory, inspection and audit recommendations, along with any management response / action plans, should be included on the Overview and Scrutiny Forward Work Programmes.

Action Taken: *Scrutiny Officers to continuously discuss and liaise with Chairs and Vice Chairs as well as monitor items on the Audit Committee agenda.*

P2. Review the current Overview and Scrutiny Forward work programmes to ensure that they fully reflect the rationale for selection and the methods by which the matter will be considered e.g. by Task and Finish Groups, Workstreams, site visits etc.

Action Taken: *Overview and Scrutiny Forward Work Programmes reviewed and a new column inserted to highlight the reason for scrutinising i.e. monitoring, policy, review or for recommendation/s. All task and finish groups, workstreams, site visits recorded on the programme.*

P3. Corporate Lead Officer's responsibility.

The Management Response will be regularly monitored to ensure the actions are completed.

CALL-IN OF DECISIONS

When a decision is made by the Cabinet, an individual member of Cabinet or a Committee of the Cabinet or under joint arrangements, the decision shall be published, including where possible by electronic means, and shall be available at the main offices of the Council normally within 2 working days of being made. Members will be sent copies of the records of all such decisions within 2 working days, by the person responsible for publishing the decision. That notice will bear the date on which it is published and will specify that the decision will come into force, and may then be implemented, on the expiry of 5 working days after the publication of the decision, unless any three members of the relevant Overview and Scrutiny Committee whose terms of reference relate to the Cabinet decision (as described in Article 6 of Part 2 of the Constitution) or six Elected Members of the Council and the Chair of that Committee, object to it and call it in. Further information in relation to the call-in process is available by referring to the Council's Constitution page 211. http://www.ceredigion.gov.uk/your-council/about-the-council/the-councils-constitution/

Ceredigion County Council received one call-in of decisions during this reporting period:

- Call-in of Cabinet decision C161 Former Care Home Site, Penparcau

Further information in relation to the call-in is available under the thematic Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

COMMITTEES

There are 5 thematic Overview and Scrutiny Committees, namely:

- Co-ordinating

- Thriving Communities

- Learning Communities

- Healthier Communities

- Corporate Resources

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

i. 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;
ii. 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;
iii. to review and make reports on issues which affect the authority's area or its residents; and
iv. to examine whether the systems the executive has in place to deliver its functions are robust and are being properly observed.

In addition, they can review the discharge of non-executive functions and report on matters of more general local concern. This could link with the authority's power

under Part 1 of the Act to promote economic, social and environmental well being, by identifying areas which the executive could address using this power.

The Local Government (Wales) Measure 2009 sets out a clear role for an authority's scrutiny function in its improvement processes: as part of its role in holding local decision makers and policy makers to account, and in its policy development role. This should extend to:

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

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

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

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

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

- Review or scrutinise the **decisions made or actions taken** by the Board by:
  - Acting as a formal consultee for the Assessment of Local Well-being
  - Acting as a formal consultee for the Local Well-being Plan
  - Receiving the Annual Progress Report
  - Receiving PSB minutes
  - Receiving performance monitoring reports.

i. Review or scrutinise the Board's **governance arrangements** by:
   - Receiving the PSB Terms of Reference following each Mandatory Meeting of the Board (A 'mandatory meeting' of the Board must be

held no later than 60 days after each subsequent ordinary election of councillors).

- Inviting members of the Board to give evidence in respect of the exercise of joint functions, (but only in respect of the exercise of joint functions conferred on them as a statutory member of the Board under the Well-being of Future Generations Act).

ii. Make reports or recommendations to the Board regarding its functions or governance arrangements.

iii. Refer matters to the relevant Thematic Overview and Scrutiny Committee to consider further, as appropriate.

iv. Present the recommendations from Scrutiny to Cabinet, the PSB and the relevant sub-group.

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

i. Consider a topic during a formal meeting;

ii. Establish a Task and Finish Group to investigate a topic in more detail;

iii. Consider at a Work Stream (please see under Learning Communities Overview and Scrutiny heading on page 52 below); and

iv. Undertake site visits.

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

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

Self-evaluation of Scrutiny

A review of the effectiveness of Overview and Scrutiny is undertaken annually. The questionnaire can be completed online or on paper. 20 (out of a possible 42) responses were received to the 2018/19 questionnaire. The Democratic Services Committee agreed that the number of questions should be reduced for the 2019/20 questionnaire with an aim to increase participation.

Overview and Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee

The Overview and Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee met on five occasions during the municipal year 2019/2020.

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

Key Issues considered

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

Representatives from Lampeter Chamber of Trade attended to discuss concerns relating to 'Advertising A Boards' located in the Town. It had been decided to invite representatives from Chamber of Trades/Commerce from each Town to a future meeting to discuss what is causing concern following consideration of the Strategic Equality Plan Monitoring Report 2017-18.

OUTCOME AND/OR IMPACT

Members suggested that specific guidelines should be in place and agreed to ask Officers to explore this possibility engaging with local businesses and trialling Lampeter Chamber of Trade in the first instance.

The Public Service Board Local Well-being Plan Annual Report video 2018/2019 was presented to the Committee. The video being the first Ceredigion Public Service Board Annual Report outlining the first year of the Local Well-being Plan delivery. The Chairs of the PSB Project Groups attended the meeting including Councillor

Ellen ap Gwynn, Leader of the Council and Chair of the Public Services Board, Mrs Hazel Lloyd Lubran (CAVO) Chair of Understanding our Communities, Mr Iwan Cray, Mid and West Wales Fire and Rescue Service, Chair Co-location and Integration of Frontline Services, Ms Ros Jervis, Hywel Dda University Health Board, Chair of Social and Green Prescribing Solutions for Health, Ms Gillian Wells, Natural Resources Wales, Chair Climate Change and Natural Resources, Mr Eifion Evans, Chair of Enterprise and Innovation. Each Chair gave a brief report of the works undertaken to date for their respective Project Group. Committee Members were then given an opportunity to question each Chair.

PSB minutes and reports on meetings of the PSB Project Groups were regularly presented to the Committee.

A report on the Community Safety Partnership Model was presented to the Committee in order to inform Members on the changes to Ceredigion's Community Safety Partnership and the reporting mechanism for the subgroups thereunder. Furthermore, to clarify the relationship between the work of the Community Safety Partnership, Serious & Organised Crime Board and the CONTEST Board on a county basis and how that interrelates at a regional and All Wales level.

OUTCOME AND/OR IMPACT

The current bi-annual reporting structure to scrutiny allows presentation of the strategic assessment and progress at mid-year point. The delivery plan and assessment will be presented to Overview and Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee in 12 months to demonstrate progress of the partnerships

Discussions took place on the Scrutiny Chairing Training provided by Welsh Local Government Association.

Members considered the Harm Reduction and Prevention Partnership report which included minutes from their meetings held over the past 18 months.

Consideration was given to the report on Whistleblowing. Areas for further development formed part of the report. Monitoring of the Authority's use of the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 was also undertaken during the year and the outcome of the IPCO inspection was considered by the Committee.

Updates were provided to the Committee on the Ceredigion Refugee Resettlement Programme. It was reported that the Council have arranged that 54 refugees have been resettled in the county along with a further 20 individuals by Croeso Teifi, Cardigan and Aberaid, Aberystwyth.

OUTCOME AND/OR IMPACT

The Committee AGREED to note:

a. the successful delivery of Ceredigion Council's initial pledge to resettle 50 individual refugees between 2015 and 2020.

b. the continuation of the Refugee Resettlement Programme in Ceredigion as a contribution to the UK Government's new resettlement scheme.
c. that Ceredigion Refugee Resettlement Programme continues to be overseen by members of this Scrutiny Committee.

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

The Adult Safeguarding Service quarterly reports were considered by the Committee. The reports highlight activity and performance of the Adult Safeguarding service and provides statistical data that enables a comparative analysis between activity in different quarters and previous years as well as noting key achievements and work undertaken during the year. The report also highlights key areas of work and improvement during this financial year.

The development of joint Scrutiny of the Growing Mid Wales Joint Committee was discussed by the Committee following an initial joint meeting between scrutiny officers for Ceredigion and Powys.

The Committee approved and noted the Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report for 2018/2019.

The Wellbeing and Improvement Objectives Annual Report 2018-19 was considered by the Committee.

OUTCOME AND/OR IMPACT

Following consideration, Member of the Committee agreed to recommend the draft Well-being and Improvement Objectives– Performance Report 2018-19 for consideration by Cabinet and Council whilst highlighting the Committees concern in relation to imminent cuts to Leisure services. Committee Members expressed grave concerns in relation to Corporate Priority number 2, Investing in People's Futures, Wellbeing Objective 2.3 Working in partnership to promote and foster healthy and active lifestyles – Steps:

• Continue to implement the vision for Sport and Physical activity to support active lifestyles; and;

• Enhance the partnership working with local clubs and societies to maximise the use of leisure facilities and participation levels across Ceredigion.

In that many Leisure Centres and Swimming Pools have either been taken over by the Community or are at risk of closure across the County which in Committee Members views questions this as a Corporate Priority.

The draft Strategic Equality Plan 2020-2024 was presented to the Committee prior to public consultation and presenting to Cabinet.

OUTCOME AND/OR IMPACT

Committee Members agreed to recommend that Cabinet accept the recommendations taking on board the points raised by the Committee in relation to the objectives.

The Strategic Equality Plan (SEP) Monitoring Report 2018-2019 was presented to the Committee to ensure that the Authority is meeting its requirements in relation to the Equality Act 2010 and the Public Sector Equality Duty 2011. Committee Members agreed to receive and endorse the Strategic Equality Plan (SEP) Monitoring Report for the period April 2018 to March 2019.

The Leader presented the report on the draft budget for 2020/2021 including the three year capital programme, outlining that this is a provisional settlement. Councillor ap Gwynn advised Members that the most significant cost pressures related to Adults Social Care budget which had been under significant strain in previous years. Members were pleased that Adult Services will receive an increased amount of funding.

OUTCOME AND/OR IMPACT

Members agreed the overall budget position as shown in the budget report to Cabinet and also made requests for further detail to be presented at the thematic scrutiny committees considering the budget.

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

The Committee received a presentation on Brexit outlining the current position, the next steps; and; the latest reported Brexit cost estimates. Information was provided on the Brexit Impact Assessment document for Ceredigion that had been produced. The assessment lists the risks identified by the Authority, its partners and governments, and outlined the proposed actions to be taken, along with progress made against those actions. This document is updated as new issues emerge and existing issues are mitigated.

OUTCOME AND/OR IMPACT

Committee Members agreed that reasonable preparations for Brexit are in place in Ceredigion and asked that officers return with an updated report in six months.

Information on the new Wales Safeguarding Procedures were presented to the Committee

The Committee considered the safeguarding element of the Annual Report of the Statutory Director of Social Services 2018-2019 which had been considered in its whole by the Healthier Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee. It was noted that future reports would be more outcome focused.

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 1st 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 in respect of their community safety functions,
- A procedure for the overview and scrutiny committee, including the partnership and its constituent bodies to deal with Councillor calls for action when dealing with community safety matters.

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

Corporate Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee

The Corporate Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee met on six separate occasions during the municipal year 2019/2020.

Key Issues considered

Consideration was given at the beginning of the municipal year to the development of the Overview and Scrutiny Forward Work Programme 2019/2020. The Forward Work Programme was monitored and updated at each Committee meeting as a standing agenda item.

The Council's Annual Report for Compliments, Complaints, Freedom of Information (FOI) and Environmental Information Regulations (EIR) activity received during the period 1st April 2018 – 31st March 2019 was presented at the 17th October 2020 Committee meeting.

The report related to complaints managed under the Council's Concerns and Complaints (Corporate) Policy and the statutory Social Services Complaints Procedure (Wales) Regulations 2014. The report was presented to the Committee in order to provide a comprehensive overview of the compliments, complaints and Freedom of Information (FOI) activity received by the Authority in the financial year. The report also provided information on complaints referred to the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales during the period.

The Corporate Compliments and Freedom of Information Manager provided Members with a background to the service and the current situation. It was reported that the report would also be presented to Full Council on the 24 October 2019 for all Members information.

OUTCOME/IMPACT

Members were complimentary of the report and the good practice the Authority has in place for the handling of complaints. Members were also assured that the necessary systems are in place to record, analyse and report on the learning from complaints.

The Corporate Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee has been monitoring complaints as it was previously an item recorded on the Authority's Risk Register.

At the same meeting, Members of the Corporate Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee considered the Health and Safety Policy prior to its consideration at Cabinet.

OUTCOME AND/OR IMPACT

Committee Members recommended that Cabinet agreed to:

- *Approve the Health and Safety Policy; subject to consideration of the following:*

1. *that the authority take an increased leading role to assist and advise all Ceredigion County Council Schools when dealing with Health and Safety issues;*
2. *draw to the attention of Governing Bodies the need to incorporate the requirement of Health and Safety first aid training into the new School curriculum;*
3. *contact the Governors Forum to ensure that Champion Health and Safety Governors receive all appropriate up-to-date training; and;*
4. *that all the Authority Elected Members receive Health and Safety training.*

Following the Committee's recommendations to Cabinet numbered 1,2 and 3 above the service agreed to undertaking additional work in relation to 1st aid training etc in schools, with a new Staff Member in place to deal specifically with Schools.

Regarding recommendation number 4, Health and Safety training, a workshop was held for Elected Members on the 27th January 2020 and Head Start training was held with 6 Committee Members in attendance on the 6th February 2020.

Consideration was also given to the Workforce Plan update.

OUTCOME AND/OR IMPACT

The report was presented so that the Committee continue to monitor its progress against the Plan.

At the same meeting, Members of the Corporate Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee considered the Domestic Abuse Policy prior to its consideration at Cabinet.

OUTCOME AND/OR IMPACT

Committee Members recommended that Cabinet agreed to:

- *Approve the Domestic Abuse Policy;*

So as to comply with the requirements of the Violence Against Women Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (Wales) Act 2015 (VAWDASV) legislation.

During the previous reporting period 2018/2019 a report was presented to inform the Committee of the function and service undertaken by Council's Estates Section.

OUTCOME AND/OR IMPACT

Three Task and Finish Groups were established to consider key work areas of the service, especially the ones that had not been examined for a period of time. Members agreed that the Authorities Estate was a valuable asset and therefore any examples of good practice or areas requiring improvement would be sought with recommendations to Cabinet when the work was completed.

At the time of writing this report, areas of this work is still ongoing and conclusions will be included in the 2020/2021 Annual Report.

The agreed Task and Finish Group titles and purpose/areas considered were:

1. Transactions:

- To consider current arrangements of the service in terms of maximising income from sales and lease agreement; and;
- To consider current arrangements when acquiring land or buildings, and to consider the robustness of process(es).
  - Asset Disposal (land and buildings)
  - Corporate Estate
  - Acquisitions

OUTCOME AND/OR IMPACT

The Transactions Group met on four separate occasions.

Members of the Group at their March 2019 meeting agreed to write to the Leader of the Council, Councillor Ellen ap Gwynn, in her role as Chair of the Development Group, to invite representatives of that Group to meet with Members of the Transactions Group. Members were interested to know what priority development opportunities the Development Group had identified, whether any of those involved Council property, and what role the Estates function might play in supporting delivery of the Development Team's aspirations. Councillor Ellen ap Gwynn, Leader of the Council, Councillor Rhodri Evans, Cabinet Member for Economy and Regeneration, Eifion Evans, Chief Executive, Russell Hughes-Pickering, Corporate Lead for Economy and Regeneration and Arwyn Davies, Corporate Manager, Growth and Enterprise met with Members of the Transactions Group on the 25th September 2019.

Following a lengthy discussion, Members agreed to recommend to Cabinet:

- *that a review be undertaken of the functions of the Estates service in order to establish and ensure that the Authority derives maximum return on its assets;*
- *that a review be undertaken on the Authorities disposal and retention policies as well as providing a strategy document outlining how the Estates service can contribute to the authorities Corporate priorities; and;*
- *that the Cabinet Member returns to the Corporate Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee in 6 months with an update.*

A report was presented at the 5th November 2019 Cabinet meeting. Cabinet agreed the recommendations.

2. Estate Management and Opportunities:

- To consider current arrangements for the enhancement or development of land and buildings;
- To consider current arrangements for licensing or permitting the use of space or other buildings, e.g. events and buildings such as the Bandstand;
- To identify future opportunities for adding vitality, promoting and marketing opportunities and increasing income.
  - Use of space and buildings (licences)
  - Property Management (maintaining and improving the asset)
  - Site Development and Planning Permissions

OUTCOME AND/OR IMPACT

The Estate Management and Opportunities Group met on three separate occasions.

3. Resources, County Farms and New Demands:

- To consider whether existing resources are fit for purpose (staff and budgets);
- To consider the effectiveness of current arrangements relating to County Farms and whether there is scope for improvement;
- To consider how well the service copes with new demands on the service e.g. energy performance certificate requirements, supporting viability assessments, and Wales Audit Office (WAO) valuation processes.
  - County Farms
  - Resources
  - New/Other Demands

OUTCOME AND/OR IMPACT

The Resources, County Farms and New Demands Group is still ongoing and has to date met on four separate occasions. It is unfortunate that a meeting arranged for the 30th April 2020 had to be postponed due to the Coronavirus pandemic. As part of its ongoing scrutiny work, the Committee fully recognises and appreciates the significant role that agriculture plays in the rural economy of Ceredigion. It is therefore important that the Council looks to maximise the potential of its farm estate,

whilst also ensuring that it continues to provide entry opportunities for people to reach the first rung on the Farming ladder. The Chairman invited existing farm tenants to attend a meeting on the 30th April 2020 as the group would greatly value and be very interested in hearing their views and experience of renting a Council Farm. The aim being to identify areas for improving experience whilst at the same time exploring the economic potential of the farm estate.

This meeting will be re-scheduled when services are resumed.

The groups have made a total between them of 23 suggestions/recommendations to date with many being accepted and implemented by the Cabinet Member and Officer following the Task and Finish Group meetings. A report will be presented to Cabinet in due course when services are resumed following the coronavirus pandemic. The Resources, County Farms and New Demands Group as mentioned has further work to be undertaken in relation to County Farms.

It was reported to Committee Members that the 2019 Summer Food & Beverage trial on the Aberystwyth Promenade was a great success, and this was evident in the public survey which received over 400 responses. In addition to the largely positive responses, there were some suggestions received to improve the trial if repeated in 2020. A summary of the comments were outlined to Members.

The Officer reported that they had considered the survey comments, and therefore the 2019 opportunities had been utilised with minor amendments and the inclusion of more locations south of the Pier. Due to the increased interest some zones had been restricted to seating only whilst others were available for food kiosks. Care was needed not to locate a competing Kiosk in front of an existing business, thereby impacting on long established businesses.

It was also reported that many prom users walk to the pier and then don't go any further south due to there being fewer attractions, and hence a zone has been located opposite Côr Y Castell, which is visible from the Pier and another further on near the harbour parking.

OUTCOME AND/OR IMPACT

Members were very pleased to hear that the trial pending Cabinet's approval would be extended for the 2020 Summer period. Cabinet at its March 2020 meeting agreed to continue with the trial so as to increase the opportunities for food and beverage sales on the promenade in the zones identified.

It was also agreed to proceed with proposals for 2 licence opportunities (North and South beach) which Cabinet approved.

Consideration was given to a feedback report from a Task and Finish Group established to consider the Budget Preparation Reports.

The Task and Finish Group comprised of: Councillor Keith Evans (Chairman), Councillors Ivor Williams, Lynford Thomas, Ifan Davies, Gareth Davies, John Adams-Lewis, Ceredig Davies, Lyndon Lloyd MBE, Wyn Thomas, Dai Mason.

The first meeting was held on the 19th June 2019 to establish the scope/aims of the review which was agreed as follows:

- To review the budget preparation process and its implications;
- To report the outcome of this review to the Corporate Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee and the Committees recommendations to Cabinet.

Key issues:

- Detailed information required on total funding received from Welsh Government to include detailed information on grants/additional funding allocated to the Authority, such as additional financial resources for dementia care etc;
- Seek clarification regarding the Standard Spending Assessments (SSA'S) Seek clarity in who decides how financial resources are divided / distributed across services;
- Request greater visibility of reporting progress regarding transformation projects, investigate this further;
- Address concerns regarding annual increase of Council Tax – suggest investigate scenarios of possible increases, e.g. at 2%, 3% etc to include cost implications.

Members then met with Officers and the Cabinet Member on the 17th September 2019 to receive information pertaining to the Budget Preparation Process and its implications. Members of the Group received a detailed presentation; that included;

Planning – including preparation of the budget strategy and the refresh of the Medium Term Financial Plan together with detailed planning and timetabling of activities required to produce the revenue and capital budgets;

Detailed preparation – incorporating the submission and collation of growth and savings bids and the calculation of expected funding;

Challenge and consultation – including public consultation;

Reporting and approval consideration of the formal budget reports - Members found this session extremely beneficial and felt that they had examined the process in detail.

The Chairman thanked Officers for their openness and contribution to the task and finish group meetings and expressed his gratitude to them for their support and engagement in the process.

The Task and Finish group were grateful to Councillor Gareth Lloyd, Cabinet Member for Finance and Procurement Services and Public Protection Services for his attendance at both group meetings.

OUTCOME AND/OR IMPACT

The Committee agreed to confirm and present the following recommendations to Cabinet on the 5th November 2019:

Following a lengthy discussion, Members agreed to recommend the following to Cabinet:

1. *Portfolio Members and Officers provide regular updates to Scrutiny Committees on a quarterly basis on the Council's financial position as it stands at that particular time;*
2. *There is a need for greater visibility on the creation and of reporting progress regarding transformation projects;*
3. *To reintroduce regular Member Budget Workshops;*
4. *that the Cabinet write to Welsh Government emphasising the authority's preference for grant funding to be included in Authorities settlement figure, but if that was unpalatable to WG, that consideration be given to regular grant funding over an extended period, rather than one off grant payments to allow for improved planning of services. In addition, it would be preferable if grants were received at the same time as settlements rather than following the settlement announcements;*
5. *to write to Welsh Government emphasising that mid or long term planning of services is difficult during this prolonged period of austerity as settlements are allocated on a yearly basis. Providing an indicative allocation over, say, a three year period would be a more efficient way for taking strategic decisions and direction in the provision of services that if longer term settlements were provided enabling Authorities greater opportunities in planning, in particular its statutory services;*
6. *that the Authority endeavours to have standby schemes on the shelf available in order to capitalise on any last minute grants or capital finance being made available by WG;*
7. *that the Finance & Procurement Service write to encourage Parents/Guardians/Foster Carers who are eligible but not claiming free school meals to do so, in order to maximise take up. Any increase in the reporting of eligible numbers, could provide Ceredigion with an enhanced level of funding based on formulae used in the calculation of SSA;*
8. *that greater clarity and information on the budget saving options are explained in detail by Cabinet Members and Officers at Budget workshops and annual Overview and Scrutiny Committee Budget meetings.*

Cabinet decision as shown below.
Recommendation number 1 = approved;
Recommendation number 2 = approved although should already see an improvement as work has been undertaken in this area;
Recommendation number 3 = regularly held;
Recommendation number 4 = this has been promoted by the Welsh Local Government Agency (WLGA) in the past and evidenced some successes. The Leader confirmed she has met with the Minister who promised to endeavour announcing together in future;

Recommendation number 5 = Welsh Government has to wait for Central Government to provide them with a figure in the first instance;
Recommendation number 6 = There are flexible plans in place in an event of any grant or capital finance funding being received later than anticipated;
Recommendation number 7 = Cabinet to ask the Director to explore this recommendation further. Head Teachers have received letters in the past as they have a closer relationship with Parents. Perhaps it would be timely to re-visit this option providing School support; and;
Recommendation number 8 = Noted in readiness to be discussed at the Budget Workshop 6th November 2019.

Consideration was given to the report of the Corporate Manager - Revenues and Financial Assessment upon the Performance report on Welfare Reform. The report had been presented to provide a position statement in relation to various aspects of Welfare Reform and an update on the introduction of Universal Credit to Ceredigion.

The Corporate Manager provided a background to the Welfare Reform and then updated the Committee upon the current situation in relation to the following:

- The Benefit Cap
- The Spare Room Subsidy (Bedroom Tax)
- Discretionary Housing Payment (DHP)
- Universal Credit

OUTCOME AND/OR IMPACT
Members receive regular reports for monitoring purposes.

At the same Committee meeting, Members considered a report outlining the present position concerning the collection of Council Tax and Business Rates for 2018/19. Members thanked the Officer for a clear and comprehensive report.

OUTCOME AND/OR IMPACT
Committee Members agreed to recommend that Cabinet consider:

- *A Business Case is put forward to consider the possibility of establishing an enforcement team of two employees to concentrate on pursuing recoverable debts. Members suggest this is piloted for two years in the first instance.*

Cabinet agreed to note the feedback report, however, did not agree to the recommendation for the following reason:

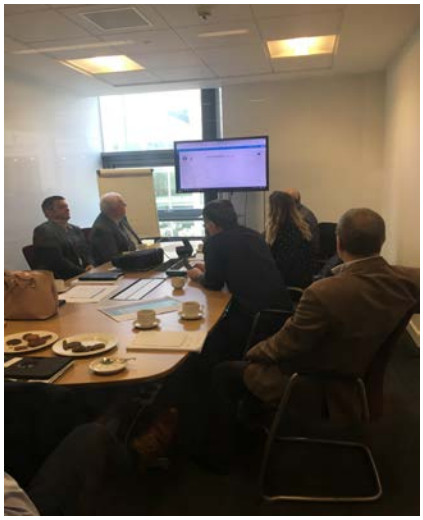
- *Over the last four years Ceredigion County Council's average Council Tax collection rate of 97.2% compares closely to the Welsh average of 97.3% and the Wales average collection of Non-Domestic (Business) Rates rate for 2018/19 was 97.6% which is 0.4% lower than Ceredigion County Council's in-year collection of 98.0%.*

Members received an update on the progress to date on delivering Customer Services across all areas of the Authority.

The Clic Project was implemented in October 2017 to create a Corporate Customer Service Contact Centre along with expanding on the services available online and via the Customer Services Offices based in Aberystwyth, Aberaeron, Cardigan and Lampeter. Committee Members have continued to monitor developments with regards to the service and Members were fortunate to have the opportunity to visit Clic during 2019.

The Contact Centre has 17 fulltime call handlers in post with overall capacity being 18. The two Supervisors continue to liaise with services to ensure accuracy of information received and along with the Customer Services Manager quality assure the data is captured and any concerns are relayed to the relevant service area/s.

Photographs of Members visit to Clic:



OUTCOME AND/OR IMPACT

The Customer Service Centre (Clic) makes it easier for people to access information and advice about Council Services. The focus of which is to streamline and centralise the existing Customer Services provision by reducing the number of Call and Customer Service Centres throughout the county to ensure that the Council provides an efficient, effective and economical service.

Members agreed that the visit was beneficial as they had an opportunity to speak with Staff, see how the system works and listen to Staff taking calls from the Public. Members were also pleased to receive an update on the progress of Customer Services.

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

- Finance and Procurement
- Policy and Performance – excluding Public Protection
- Democratic Services
- People and Organisation
- Customer Contact
- Legal and Governance
- Economy and Regeneration - *Corporate Estate only*

Officers and the relevant Cabinet Member presented the information relevant to their Service Area.

OUTCOME AND/OR IMPACT

Following consideration, Members agreed to recommend that Cabinet:

1. *approve the service areas budget within the Committee's remit as above.*

Committee Members also considered the proposed Fees and Charges changes under the Committee's remit.

OUTCOME AND/OR IMPACT

Following consideration, Members agreed to recommend that Cabinet:

1. *approve the proposed Fees and Charges within the Committee's remit*.

At the 26th February 2020 Committee meeting, consideration was given to the Social Services Complaints Policy and Procedure.

It was reported that there was a currently no definitive, written policy or procedure for the management of the Social Services Complaints in the Council, aside from the guidance document issued by Welsh Government in respect of the Social Services Complaints Procedure (Wales) Regulations 2014.

The Complaints Manager reported that once the policy was approved by Cabinet and then implemented, it would be possible to update all other information relating to it (e.g. information leaflets for the public, posters, training for staff etc).

OUTCOME AND/OR IMPACT

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

- *Cabinet approve the draft Social Services Complaints Policy and Procedures.*

Subject to consideration of the following:

1. *Ensure that a link to the Authority's Complaints procedure(s) is given greater prominence on the Council Website's menu page so that step-by-step guidance on how to complain is easily accessible to the public;*
2. *Ensure that the correct title for the Statutory Director of Social Services role is consistent throughout the document;*
   The current Corporate Lead Officer for Porth Ceredigion undertakes the Statutory role of Director of Social Services.
3. *Page 13 of the Policy refers to Complaints involving more than one body. Members suggest that School Governing Bodies should also be included, the policy should therefore read as follows:*
   - *(e.g. if the complaint is about both the Council, Health Board or a School Governing Body); and ……*
4. *That the Healthier Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee should receive regular reports on Social Services Complaints and they should determine the regularity of such reports as part of their forward work programme.*

Cabinet agreed to explore the Committee's suggestions numbered 1 to 3 above. With regards to recommendation 4, the Overview and Scrutiny Officer to liaise with the Committee Chairman.

At the same meeting, consideration was given to the report of the Corporate Lead Officer, Economy & Regeneration on the Draft Asset Development Policy 2020.

It was reported that the existing Policy was agreed in 2008, and its principal focus was to outline the procedures for disposal of surplus Council Assets. The Policy required updating to provide more consideration to optimising the use and/or value of our assets prior to disposing on the open market.

OUTCOME AND/OR IMPACT

Committee Members agreed to recommend that Cabinet:

1. *approve the Draft Asset Development Policy to enable a more strategic approach to the development and management of assets;*
2. *that it was crucial that Local Members were always consulted prior to, and kept informed throughout any leasing, disposals and acquisitions process (including Community Asset Transfers); and that this was included as a requirement in the draft Asset Development Policy (2020);*
3. *to consider where appropriate transferring surplus assets under the Community Asset Transfer Scheme; and;*
4. *the Chairman and Vice-chairman of the Corporate Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee should be Members of the Assessment Panel.*

Cabinet agreed to approve the Draft Asset Development Policy. With regards to Recommendation 2, it would not be possible under current circumstances to consult the Local Member prior to, and throughout all the Authorities leasing, disposals and acquisitions processes, this recommendation was not therefore agreed by Cabinet. Local Members are however contacted as and when Officers deem it relevant. Recommendation 3 would be considered as the new policy is implemented.

With regards to recommendation number 4, Cabinet agreed that the Corporate Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee Chairman, Councillor Keith Evans and the vice-chairman, Councillor Ivor Williams, should be included as Members of the Assessment Panel.

The Monitoring Officer reported that decision C161 (details below) had been called in following the Cabinet meeting held on 25 February 2020.

A Special Meeting of the Committee was convened and held on the 16th March 2020 to consider the decision of the Cabinet at its meeting held on the 25 February 2020

in respect of the Former Care Home Site, Penparcau (Minute reference C161 shown below). The Call-in was received from the following Members:
Councillors Dai Mason, Lyndon Lloyd MBE and John Adams-Lewis.

Cabinet decision 25 February 2020 (C161)
C161 Former Care Home Site,
Penparcau
DECISION
(i) To revoke Cabinet decision
C214 (6/3/18);
(ii) To agree to:
a. authorise officers to liaise with Registered Social Landlords (RSL); and,
b. approve the sale of the land to a RSL and dispose thereafter if an agreement to purchase can be achieved within 3 months.
(iii) If (ii) above cannot be achieved within 3 months, to approve the sale of the land on the open market without identifying any preferred uses.
(iv) That any capital receipt from the disposal of the former care home site, Penparcau, is ring-fenced for investment in the capital programme for Council run residential homes.
(I) Reason for decision:-
(II) To dispose of a surplus asset.

OUTCOME AND/OR IMPACT
A representative on behalf of the North Ceredigion Forum for Elderly Care made a request to speak at the meeting under the terms and conditions set out in the Public Engagement Protocol. The Chairman authorised this request. Local Members were also given the opportunity to speak.

Following consideration, Committee Members agreed to recommend that Cabinet:
1. postpones progressing a sale of Bodlondeb for 6 months, given the current coronavirus situation; and,
2. following that period, both the Corporate Resources and Healthier Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committees reconsider the matter of future EMI Nursing in Ceredigion.

The Chief Executive explained that the Corporate Resources Overview and Scrutiny recommendation would be considered at the Cabinet meeting the following day (17th March 2020) due to the current developing COVID-19 situation and the possibility that further meetings may not be held for some time.

Following due consideration and discussion, the Cabinet agreed that decision C161, 25 February 2020, stands and was implemented immediately. The Monitoring officer stated that decision C161 would become effective immediately, and that the call-in procedure was now concluded.

Healthier Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee

The Healthier Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee met on seven separate occasions during 2019/2020.

Key Issues considered

Consideration was given at the beginning of the municipal year to the development of the Overview and Scrutiny Forward Work Programme 2019/2020. The Forward Work Programme was monitored and updated at each Committee meeting as a standing agenda item.

The Service Manager - Quality Assurance, Children Services and the Corporate Lead Officer for Porth Ceredigion both regularly attended Committee meetings to present the quarterly Independent Reviewing Service Performance Management Reports which included national and local standards, and targets used to measure outcomes for looked after children and care leavers. The Independent Reviewing Officer has regard as to whether the child/young person's human rights are being breached in any way and, if so, considers a referral to CAFCASS Cymru.

OUTCOME AND/OR IMPACT

The importance of the Independent Reviewing Service was recognised and Members were pleased to receive assurance that the needs of Looked After Children were met and are continuously improved. Members congratulated the service' staff and expressed their gratitude for their commitment and hard work. During discussion, it was proposed and agreed that the Healthier and Learning Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committees hold a Joint meeting to consider the Looked After Children School budget along with the availability of Welsh speaking Foster Carers for Welsh speaking children, to include the support which is available for Looked After Children in schools.

The Service Manager noted that the preventative initiatives undertaken in the County were proving to be very successful. Ceredigion has the lowest figure of children

needing to come into care in Wales. Looked After Children's health and education is good. Reviews are undertaken and within the specified timeframe. The recording of visits has improved and continues to do so. This information contributes to Members fulfilling their roles as Corporate Parents.

Members noted their concerns in relation to the need for further work to be undertaken to improve outcomes for care leavers and agreed to receive a further report at a future meeting and also recommended that Cabinet.

- *Write a letter to Head Teachers of all Ceredigion Schools reminding their Staff and the Governing Body of their responsibilities with regards to Looked after Children's Health and Well-being*.

A Task and Finish group to explore costs associated with children placed in Residential Homes was established following the consideration of the draft budget for 2019/20 in January 2019.

OUTCOME AND/OR IMPACT

Following discussion, Members were satisfied that the correct procedures and processes were in place and that the children's wellbeing is a strategic priority.

A feedback report was then presented to Members of the Healthier Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Members agreed to recommend the following to Cabinet; in that they:

- *Are mindful when considering future draft budgets that situations can change with regards to the number of children placed in residential homes on a daily basis and the monies required to pay for those placements can fluctuate;*
- *Ensure that when a child reaches adulthood that the transition period is as smooth as possible, taking into account individual needs;*
- *Explore sharing resources with neighbouring authorities;*
- *Ensure that Officers continue to visit the Children at their placements on a regular basis to meet statutory requirements.*

Cabinet agreed recommendations 1 to 4 above.

At the 13th February 2020 Committee Meeting, Members met to consider the draft Budget being recommended by Cabinet for 2020/21 and Members welcomed the additional paper which had been requested by the Healthier Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee Chairman which explained the change in Childrens' Services budget and the fact that Out of County Placements had now been moved under the Leadership Group budget as a Corporate item.

The Healthier Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee at its 11 July 2019 meeting received the Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) Local Authority Performance Review annual letter.

The letter summarised the review of Ceredigion County Council's performance in carrying out its statutory social services functions. It followed the four principles of the Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 204 (SSWBA) and CIW's increasingly

collaborative and strengths based approach to supporting improvement. The letter is intended to assist the local authority and its partners to continually improve.

Its content is informed by CIW's inspection and performance evaluation activity during the year as follows:

- Review of Ceredigion Local Authority's Looked After Children self-assessment and subsequent challenge meeting held with Officers;
- Engagement activity with children and carers, and discussions with the local authority as part of the Looked After Children thematic programme;
- Review of self-evaluation report in respect of promoting independence and preventing escalating needs of older adults (65+);
- Focused activity undertaken in the local authority in both children and adults services; and;
- Health Inspectorate Wales and Care Inspectorate Wales inspection of the Community Mental Health Team.

OUTCOME AND/OR IMPACT

Committee Members were pleased to receive such a positive report and wished to extend their congratulations to the Team involved, commending their hard work and commitment in undertaking their day to day roles.

At the 18th September 2019 Committee meeting, the Carers Development Officer, Heather West was welcomed to the meeting to present the report on the 2018 – 2019 West Wales Care Partnership Regional Carers Group Annual Report.

The report summarised the activity of the West Wales Carers Development Group (WWCDG) during the period 1st April 2018 – 31st March 2019.

It was noted that the Welsh Government had welcomed and endorsed the report.

The Carers Development Officer highlighted the key developments and progress for 2018-19:

- Commencement of a regional Employers for Carers membership and establishment of a formal steering group to support the roll out;
- Completion of Phase 3 of the Carers Resilience and Well-being pilot in Ceredigion;
- Roll out of the new Social Care Wales national Carer Aware e-learning course;

- Development of a carers needs assessment quality assurance framework and audit tool;
- Identifying new and innovative approaches to respite services;
- Launch of the redesigned Investors in Carers scheme.

OUTCOME AND/OR IMPACT

Members welcomed the opportunity for discussion which included the following points:

1. *The Welsh Government is committed to a new strategic action. An announcement in relation to the plan is due before end of year. Respite is to be a large part of the plan.*
2. *Work is being undertaken in schools and colleges to promote the care profession, highlighting the many opportunities available across the spectrum of health and social care. Pupils have shown significant interest in these career opportunities.*
3. *It was noted that many carers prefer not to have recognition that they are carers. The Service continues to endeavour to make the environment more comfortable in order that carers are not so reluctant in coming forward to request help.*
4. *A number of partner third sector care organisations within the county have applied for grant funding from Carers Wales and the Carers Trust who have received funding to help raise the profile of carers.*
5. *The Service encourages carers to undertake needs assessments through events such as Carers' Rights days. They are informed of their rights such as carers allowance and attendance allowance.*
6. *Sufficiency of care workers is a challenge UK wide. There is a need to recruit and retain staff within county and to ensure that some carers can care and continue their own employment too.*
7. *In relation to cross boundary circumstances, care can be discussed and arranged between counties. The carer would access support from their local authority and the cared-for would have their care package in their own county.*
8. *72 hour care provided in Carmarthenshire was highlighted as a much needed approach in Ceredigion.*

The Chairman thanked the Carers Development Officer for her presentation.

- *Members of the Healthier Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee agreed to note the West Wales Care Partnership Regional Carers Group Annual Report 2018-2019.*

The Carers Development Officer, Heather West also presented the Carers Unit Annual Report 2018-19 to inform Members of the achievements of the Carers Unit and progress against their agreed targets and objectives during 2018-19.

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

The key highlights were noted which include the gold award for investors in carers. Member were pleased to learn that Ceredigion Carers Unit had received a Gold Investors in Carers (IiC) Award.

OUTCOME AND/OR IMPACT

Following the presentation of the report, points raised in discussion included:

1. *The need to address problems with wheelchair users accessing public transport and trains in particular. It was noted that a small task and finish group is currently investigating transport accessibility and looking for solutions. The Welsh Government is also in discussion with Transport for Wales.*
2. *Information should be available at all clinics on the borders of Ceredigion as the agreement stipulate that GP Practices have a duty to maintain information.*
3. *Meetings are regularly held with CAVO in order that a holistic view of support is provided.*
4. *Carers Rights days and Carers weeks are held at different venues each year in order to try to reach as many people as possible. The service is developing further smaller pop-up events to give as much coverage as possible whilst mindful of staff resources.*
5. *The service intends to roll out Investors in Carers in schools throughout Ceredigion during the autumn.*

The Chairman thanked the Carers Development Officer and her team for their continued excellent work. Following consideration, the Committee agreed to note the 2018-19 Ceredigion County Council Carers Unit Annual report for Social Services.

At the same meeting the Manager of Flying Start, Rhian Rees presented the Flying Start annual report in order to provide an update on the Flying Start programme (including Outreach) in Ceredigion, its contribution to Early Intervention and Preventative Services, the Welsh language and to inform Members of its work to mitigate the impact of Adverse Childhood Experiences through building resilience.

Main points the programme has delivered were highlighted through the year along with service developments during the year.

OUTCOME AND/OR IMPACT

Further funding has been secured to support the work of Integrating Early Years Systems. This will be taken forward on a regional basis in partnership with Carmarthenshire and Pembrokeshire although the models of implementation in the 3 counties would vary a little.

As part of this work, strengths and weaknesses in the current range of services to families and children are being investigated and ways are being explored to ensure that there is a consistent, high quality responsive offer across the county – regardless of where people live.

The Chairman thanked the Flying Start Manager for her excellent report.

Following consideration, the Healthier Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee agreed to note the work of Flying Start across the county and the contribution the programme is making to the outcomes of a significant number of families, the Welsh language and tackling ACEs. The Committee also agreed to note the programme of work with Welsh Government on Developing Integrated Early Years Systems.

At the 13th January 2020 meeting, The Corporate Lead Officer for Porth Ceredigion presented the report on an update on the Implementation of the Liberty Protection Safeguards amendment to the Mental Capacity Act.

She reported that the introduction of the new amendments would have a significant impact on the Council and its ability to ensure that it meets its statutory functions. Whilst it had been proposed that there will be a year of transition to the new legislation, significant work would need to be undertaken to ensure that everything is in place to meet the requirements of the amended Act in October 2020.

It was noted that the National Training Framework, regulations and guidance were yet to be published. However, preparations were in place and a staff member had been identified to lead on this.

OUTCOME AND/OR IMPACT

During discussion, it was noted that the current backlog was routinely and consistently monitored to ensure that it was managed effectively. A Councillor raised concern in relation to the amount of backlog. The Corporate Lead Officer – Porth Ceredigion stated that as it was not yet known what the requirements of the service would be and whether the service would need to be remodelled, a decision to placing the backlog on the risk register is deferred for the time being.

The Corporate Lead Officer of Porth Ceredigion highlighted the need to further embed the Mental Capacity Act in every day practice with a need to focus on social work practice. The availability of section 12 doctors across Wales remains an issue. However, the new legislation states that a GP will be able to assess capacity. The assistance of local GPs would help the need for Welsh speaking doctors in capacity assessments. Currently, assessments are completed in Welsh when requested.

Committee Members agreed to monitor this situation and receive a further report in future.

During discussion it was noted that Social Services were working closely with the Hywel Dda Health Board, looking at how funding is used and how to address unprecedented issues. Strategies were being implemented in the enablement Service and Social Care which would alleviate concerns in relation to elderly patients taking up hospital beds until their preferred Care Home became available.

Committee Members also received the Annual Report of the Statutory Director of Social Services for the period 2018-2019 and were asked to note the report as historical information pertaining to this period.

Officers explained that significant progress had been made during and following this period and continues to do so.

The report described how Social Services has performed during this period 2018-2019 and also sets out the priorities for the coming year 2019-2020.

OUTCOME AND/OR IMPACT

The Committee identified an area that it would be considering further over the coming months and would be added to the Forward Work Programme, namely; Delayed Transfers of Care.

The Corporate Manager Public Protection presented the Air Quality Strategy Progress Report for Ceredigion, 2019 and highlighted the current situation. It was noted that the County's results are among the best in Wales and that all current statutory air quality standards and objectives have been complied with, by specified dates, at all locations (including roadsides) in Ceredigion. Longer term, and

indicative, standards are also complied with for the air pollutants contained in Regulations.

Members welcomed the positive report and the opportunity for discussion.

Members suggested that it would be of benefit for future reports to include trend figures and show comparisons between rural and urban areas.

OUTCOME AND/OR IMPACT

Members recommend that Cabinet accept the following recommendations:
1. To continue to monitor and report on air quality and associated issues in Ceredigion and publish an annually updated report on the Council website in line with statutory requirements.
2. To make recommendations to assist in the future development of the air quality monitoring and reporting regime and build on suggestions already made (viz. - to increase monitoring in the vicinity of schools and busy town locations, to produce an abridged version of the report and to present a concise summary of key results at the start of the report).

Subject to consideration of the following recommendations:
1. that a 'Good News' Press Release is published advertising the fact that Ceredigion ranks with the best in Wales for Air Quality;
2. that the possibility of developing a Strategy is considered in future;
3. that the possibility of planting more trees throughout Ceredigion (Towns and Rural areas) is explored in the future (this does not fall within the remit of Public Protection);
4. that Schools encourage Parents/ Carers who drop off their children and collect their children from School not to leave their car engines on whilst doing so, the same applies to School Buses; and;
5. that further information is provided regarding Nanoparticles at a future meeting.

Cabinet agreed to explore the Committee's recommendations numbered 2, 4 and 5 above. With regards to recommendation number 1, a 'Good News' Press Release was published on the 29th January 2020 (copy shown on the next page of this report). With regards to recommendation number 3, as trees and woodlands in and around towns and cities have a vital role to play in promoting sustainable communities, in the last few years a growing body of research has demonstrated that trees bring a wide range of benefits both to individual people and to society as a whole a number of trees have to date been planted throughout Ceredigion.

Ceredigion's air quality still ranks with the best in Wales

A progress report has shown that air quality in Ceredigion continues to rank with the best in Wales on the basis of three Welsh Government air quality indicators. The report was approved by the council's Cabinet on 28 January 2020.

Air quality is monitored in Ceredigion for four of the key air pollutants and results are compared with national and European standards and objectives.

The report shows that all current statutory Air Quality Standards and Objectives at all locations in Ceredigion have been complied with and no areas need further management. Trends show that concentrations of some of the main air pollutants are falling in the county.

Gareth Lloyd is the Cabinet Member responsible for Public Protection. He said, "People visit Ceredigion for its beautiful landscapes and fresh air so it's great to have proof that Ceredigion has some of the best air quality in Wales."

The council has reduced its carbon emissions by 42% since 2008, saving the council £4 million to reinvest in services.

A Carbon Management Plan to reduce carbon emissions and address climate change will continue to be developed in Ceredigion with the aim of making the council's carbon emissions net zero by 2030. This is in line with the Welsh Government's target for the public sector in Wales.

29/01/2020

Martyn Palfreman, The Head of Partnership, West Wales Care Partnership and Peter Skitt, County Director Ceredigion, Hywel Dda University Health Board attended

a meeting to present the report on 'A Healthier West Wales Regional Transformation Programme'.

In March 2019 the West Wales Care Partnership was awarded £11.9m from the Welsh Government's Transformation Fund, in order to provide resources for implementation of the national plan for health and social care A Healthier Wales.

This funding supports delivery of three major transformation programmes across the region as set out in a regional proposal A Healthier West Wales.

Martyn Palfreman explained the funded programmes as follows:
Programme 1: Proactive Technology-enabled care – providing bespoke wellbeing assessments, proactive welfare calls and enhanced community support for around 5,000 vulnerable individuals across the region.
Programme 3: Fast-tracked, consistent integration – establishing multi-professional, rapid response interventions to individuals in crisis within their homes over an intensive period, thereby avoiding the need for hospital admissions.
Programme 7: Creating Connections for All – enhancing community connector roles across the region, promoting active volunteering and kind communities and supporting bespoke intergenerational programmes to reduce social isolation.

The Healthier West Wales programme also included five additional programmes, which were not awarded funding in the first round. Revised bids for these programmes totalling £6.2m were submitted in May 2019 and a ministerial decision is still awaited in respect of these. An update on the progress in Ceredigion was provided. The programmes have detailed plans attached to each. It was noted that not all areas were at the same stage but would be commenced before the end of funding. An independent evaluation of the programme would be undertaken and is a condition of the funding. Good evidence would aid future funding applications. It was noted that key performance indicators would be circulated once the Ceredigion model is complete.

OUTCOME AND/OR IMPACT
Following discussion, it was proposed that an invitation is extended to Martyn Palfreman and Peter Skitt to attend a future meeting so that Committee Members are informed and can monitor progress.
The Chair thanked Martyn Palfreman and Peter Skitt for their presence at the meeting.

A special Joint meeting was arranged on the 15th January 2020, between Members of the Healthier Communities and Learning Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committees as agreed at a previous Committee meeting.

Consideration was given to the report upon Mental Health in Reach in Schools Project. It was reported that in July 2017, Welsh Government Cabinet Secretaries for Education and Health, Wellbeing and Sport jointly agreed to run pilots to test provision of the Mental Health In reach support to Schools from Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS).
OUTCOME AND/OR IMPACT
Committee was extremely pleased with the work progressed to date: and

Members agreed to recommend that Cabinet:

- *write to the Welsh Government Cabinet Secretaries for Education and Health and Wellbeing and Sport to encourage them to consider regular future funding, to fully support the best possible outcomes for children and Young people in line with the Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015*

Cabinet agreed the recommendation and have confirmed that a letter has been sent to the Welsh Government Cabinet Secretaries for Education and Health and Wellbeing and Sport and that the Cabinet Member now awaits a response.

Consideration was also given to the report upon the arrangements for Foster Carers to support children in their care in their use of the Welsh language and the encouragement and support given to foster carers to learn Welsh. The report had been presented in order to provide the committee with information on foster parent support for looked after children and to consider the educational requirements of children in care as requested by the Committee Members. The Service Manager for Quality Assurance, Children Services provided members on the current situation and the next steps for the service.

OUTCOME AND/OR IMPACT

M*embers were pleased and reassured with the continued work on schemes to support foster carers so they can support the bilingual development of looked after children. Members agreed the importance that they too promote the need for more foster carers within the County in the Communities.*

Consideration was then given to the report upon the Support available for Ceredigion Looked After Children as requested by Committee Members. The report had been presented in order to outline support available to Looked After Children in addition to providing information on Looked After Children's educational achievements. The following information was provided by power point:

- Ceredigion Looked After Children Overview
- Pupil Development Grant (PDG)
- Ceredigion School Allocation
- Additional Learning Needs overview LAC
- Attainment Data
- Next Steps

OUTCOME AND/OR IMPACT

Members agreed to receive the current position regarding the support available to Looked After Children in addition to the academic achievement for 2018/2019.

At its meeting on the 22 January 2020, Members of the Healthier Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee considered a report on the changes in funding and delivery offer of Free Swimming for under 16's and over 60's.

The Free Swimming initiative (FSI) had been funded by Welsh Government and administered by Sport Wales since 2003. The scheme changed in 2015 with a significant reduction in funding. Ceredigion's grant was reduced from £74,375 to £45,300 which resulted in a significant reduction in free swimming for under 16's, with some reduction for over the 60's.

Sport Wales subsequently commissioned an independent review of Free Swimming which was circulated in September 2018. The review set out a compelling case for change and highlighted some concerns for the future. Sport Wales had since worked closely with Welsh Government to arrive at a new approach for Free Swimming.

Committee Members received the current information relating to the funding and were informed that the funding allocated across Wales would halve next year.
Members expressed their disappointment that the funding would halve.

OUTCOME AND/OR IMPACT
Following discussion, Members recommend that Cabinet agree the proposals as set out in the report.

At its 22 January 2020 meeting, Members of the Healthier Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee considered an update on Sport Wales' plans to form a Regional Sport Partnership (CSAP).

Following a lengthy discussion, Members were asked to consider the following recommendation:

- To share information and receive the views of the Healthier Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee about the proposed changes to Sport Wales reorganisation.

OUTCOME AND/OR IMPACT
Committee Members recommended that Cabinet:

- *Ensure Ceredigion's involvement in the new partnership; subject to the following considerations:*

1. *The report advises that there has been little feedback to the pilot scheme in North Wales. The Committee suggest that feedback needs to be incorporated;*
2. *There are better infrastructure links between North, Mid and South Wales. Connectivity in Ceredigion is not so easy and this could be a barrier for some people to participate in certain sporting activities;*
3. *Members feel strongly and wish to emphasise that they do not support a significant reduction in sports provision in Ceredigion;*
4. *Members were of the opinion that not enough consideration has been given to date to very rural areas compared to urban areas; and;*
5. *To ensure there is sufficient engagement with the clubs, societies and other relevant organisations in Ceredigion.*

Cabinet Members agreed to approve the request to continue discussions with Sport Wales in order to ensure the best possible proposal and solution for Ceredigion/Mid-Wales. Cabinet Members also agreed to consider recommendations 1 to 5 outlined

above in any future discussions.

Officers attended the meeting in order to present a report to respond to Members' request for an update on the affordable/accessible housing programme. Members raised and requested information as follows:

- Ensure there is sufficient social housing for the elderly, disabled, and young families to enable them to remain in their local communities in order to monitor progress of the Social Housing Grant Programme, the work carried out to ensure that there is proactive development of affordable, accessible and specialised housing in the county to meet the needs of the local population.

Members expressed their concern at the lack of accessible housing in Aberystwyth and the service confirmed that they are aware of those concerns. Officers confirmed that more units would soon be available in Aberystwyth and would reduce the waiting list. Members were pleased to hear that this would in the near future reduce the waiting list.

During discussions, the following was noted:

- That disused school buildings were looked at as part of the asset disposal protocol but that it would not be cost effective for the Council to covert old school buildings into homes. However, the conversion of empty homes and offices into flats for emergency accommodation is due to be explored;
- There is limited capacity for housing development in some towns and villages due to the need for significant improvement in Welsh Water's sewerage systems;
- That the Service may explore the possibility of renting out a house where the owner has opted to move into sheltered accommodation to avoid an empty home if no other; and;
- Concerns were raised in relation to some of the county's towns where services have been diminished resulting in less people choosing to live there.

OUTCOME AND/OR IMPACT

The Committee agreed the broad programme of work that forms the Social Housing Grant Programme that aims to increase the availability of accessible, affordable and specialised housing in the county to meet the needs of the local population.

Members however raised concern at the amount of people currently on the Housing waiting list.

A report was also presented regarding an update on the mechanisms in place to bring empty homes back into use and report on the Welsh Government Inquiry and subsequent report into Empty Properties.

It was stated that there are over a 1000 properties currently empty in the county. The Service endeavours to work with property owners and take enforcement actions where necessary in order to bring empty properties back into use. They are working closely with economic regeneration colleagues with a view to agreeing an action plan.

OUTCOME AND/OR IMPACT

During discussion, Member raised concerns as to insufficient capacity within the service to deal with empty homes. It was noted that the workload of the Public Protection Officer only allows her to attend to empty home issues for approximately one half-day a week.

Following consideration Members were pleased with the current actions taken in dealing with problematic empty properties, and note the recommendations in the WG Enquiry into Empty Properties and their potential implications if applied in Ceredigion. They did however state concerns in relation to cost-effectiveness and lack of staff resources and the need of a dedicated housing officer.

The following recommendations were made to Cabinet:

1. *Ceredigion County Council do not have a dedicated empty property Officer. Due to limited resources and competing priorities, the amount of time spent on empty property work equates to a maximum of half a day per week, sometimes less. Members recommend that Cabinet consider employing a dedicated empty property Officer for the authority; and;*
2. *That Officers are encouraged to use legislation where they see appropriate and if that any monies are claimed, it is then placed back into this service. For example, legislation introduced in 2014; namely; Housing (Wales) Act 2014, gives Councils the power to charge up to 200% council tax on properties that have been empty for more than 12 months.*

Cabinet agreed to explore the recommendations. Officers were due to have an awareness training and collaboration day in March with representatives across LA's, housing providers and Welsh Government, but unfortunately the event had to be postponed due to the Covid-19 situation. This would have been facilitated by an external consultant and a smaller group thereafter would be working on a Ceredigion action plan including some support required to deliver on the plan. This will be rescheduled in the future.

A report on Dog Breeding Establishments, namely; a Regulatory Overview in order to provide a summary of the existing regulatory framework regarding Dog Breeding Establishments, along with an outline of the licencing inspection process and enforcement options available to Officers was presented to Committee Members. It was stated that there are two main statutory provisions available to regulate Dog Breeding Establishments, namely,

- the Animal Welfare Act 2006 and
- the Animal Welfare (Breeding of Dogs) (Wales) Regulations 2014.

The Authority had also put in place 19 licence conditions including the above and it is against these conditions that all licensed dog breeders in Ceredigion are assessed. There are currently 31 licensed dog breeding establishments in the county.
Recent enforcement action and current challenges were highlighted.

Members welcomed the opportunity for discussion where it was noted that the Service endeavours to achieve reimbursement for prosecuting. The Courts decide

on the level of fees to be repaid. Fees and charges have been changed from this year to reflect a charge for additional visits to dog breeding establishments.

It was stated that different officers inspect establishments and license application forms have to be completed fully when licenses expire. Independent vets from out of county inspect establishments. Spot checks are undertaken regularly and especially to establishments where there may be compliance concerns.

Before undertaking enforcement actions, the service works closely with establishments in order to help them to improve and comply with conditions.

Members thanked Officers for the report and for the work undertaken by the service. It was acknowledged that staff members, at times, witness and experience some very disturbing cases. It was requested that another report is presented to a future meeting in relation to Animal Welfare and staff working conditions when investigating sites.

OUTCOME AND/OR IMPACT

Following consideration of the report, The Committee agreed to recommend that:

1. Cabinet write to the Welsh Government to highlight the need for additional funding to address the issues arising from dog breeding in those Counties with the greatest regulatory workload, such as Ceredigion.

2. the current approach to education and enforcement is maintained and supported.

3. Officers continue to bring any changes to licencing conditions and regulations to the attention of elected members.

Cabinet agreed all 3 recommendations and are awaiting a reply from Welsh Government in regards to recommendation number 1.

The annual budget was considered on the 13th February 2020. Committee Members considered the service budget for those service areas that are within this Committee's remit; namely:

- Children Services
- Adult Services
- Policy and Performance – Public Protection only
- Lifelong Learning and Culture - Leisure only

Officers and the relevant Cabinet Member presented the information relevant to their Service Area.

Members welcomed the additional paper that had been requested by the Chairman following publication of papers, which explained the change in Childrens' Services budget and the fact that Out of County Placements had now been moved under the Leadership Group budget as a Corporate item.

OUTCOME AND/OR IMPACT

Following consideration, Members agreed to recommend that Cabinet:

1. *approved the service areas budget within the Committee's remit.*

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

Committee Members considered the proposed Fees and Charges changes under this Committee's remit.

OUTCOME AND/OR IMPACT

Following consideration, Members agreed to recommend that Cabinet:

1. *approve the proposed Fees and Charges.*

An overview of Substance and Alcohol Misuse Services in the region and in Ceredigion was presented and the Committee had the opportunity to examine the latest Dyfed Area Planning Board Annual Report. The Committee had raised concerns relating to the increasing evidence of drug misuse in some areas of Ceredigion and the Chair had requested some specific additional information be presented.

The Corporate Manager Substance Misuse presented the Dyfed Area Planning Board for Drug and Alcohol Misuse Annual Report 2018-19. The report highlighted education and awareness, harm reduction, treatment, recovery and the area's performance. Committee Members were pleased to note that key performance indicator statistics for Dyfed were good with numerous projects being undertaken along with outreach work.

OUTCOME AND/OR IMPACT

The Officer spoke of the challenges ahead which include completing a new tender and strategy to reflect the new Welsh Government strategy. It was noted that a Business Plan would be presented to Cabinet following being presented to this Committee for scrutinising. Members proposed that a significant amount of work is undertaken in schools to deter children and young people from experimenting with substances. They also raised concerns in relation to grave substance misuse in the county and the Corporate Lead Officer for Policy and Performance proposed that he would convey the Committee's concerns to the Chief Constable of Dyfed-Powys Police. An update report on the points raised would be presented at a future meeting.

Officers from Flying Start attended the meeting to deliver an interesting presentation on the importance of physical play on early brain development as requested by the Chairman following a visit earlier in the year by the Chairman and the Overview and Scrutiny Officer to speak with Flying Start Officers at Penparcau.

It was noted that physical play has proven to be important in developing the sensory system, i.e. Visual, Taste, Auditory, Olfactory, Tactile, Vestibular and Proprioception, and in particular in babies and children aged 0-7 years.

Activities undertaken by Flying Start to

help develop the child's senses were outlined and included outdoor play, messy play, yoga, dance and jabadao. A short film demonstrating young children positively responding to jabadao was shown.

OUTCOME AND/OR IMPACT

Members were extremely encouraged to hear such impressive and proven facts and agreed to recommend to Cabinet as below.

Members recommend that Cabinet:

1. *Do their utmost to ensure that Flying Start funding continues to be secured from the Welsh Government; and;*
2. *the importance of physical play and developing senses on the brain health of children from 0 to 7 years old is highlighted throughout the County including those areas who do not have Flying Start Centres.*

The feedback report will be presented to a future Cabinet meeting and their decision will be reported in next year's annual report for 2020/2021.

The Chairman requested specific information regarding Open Access Play facilities in Ceredigion and invited Cathryn Morgan, Families First and Syrian Refugee Coordinator and Gill Byrne, RAY Ceredigion to present a report on Open Access Play.

Evidenced studies show that play projects:

• are just as effective as sport and PE programmes in boosting physical activity levels and hence helping to tackle child obesity;

• support children to become more resilient through the development of their emotional and social self-management skills;

• provide powerful opportunities for children to engage positively with their school and the wider community, and with nature and the environment; and;

• encourage neighbourliness, volunteering and social action, and improve community cohesion.

The Play Sufficiency Duty means that the Council must assess the quantity and quality of play areas every 3 years and develop a Play Action Plan to address

areas of weakness. As a result of this, links have been made between play opportunities and a range of Council services including Planning, Transport, School Services, Family Support, Childcare Team, Youth Service, Sports & Recreation, Ecology/Biodiversity, Tim Plant Anabl, Cered and the Health & Safety Team. This has enabled opportunities to work together, for example – Ceredigion Actif's 'Active Play' project for Family Support providers and the inclusion of play areas in Ceredigion's Green Infrastructure Assessment.

Funding for services is becoming increasingly challenging, and in some rural locations there is little, or no, play provision. The Council is currently working with Wales & West Housing to offer basic play awareness training in communities; a Play Box is then given to the community so that they can facilitate informal play sessions themselves. Should they wish to gain further qualifications and formalise their play sessions, they have the opportunity to undertake training delivered by RAY Ceredigion.

It was noted that positive play opportunities are a crucial contribution to building resilience that mitigate the impact of Adverse Childhood Experiences and poverty. Good play opportunities often help to build positive relationships within the community, improves feeling of community safety and can reduce pressure on the police.

During discussion the following was highlighted:

- Ceredigion Community Chest – funding opportunities available for communities, which could be used to provide play events;
- The need for consultation with children and young people before removing playgrounds; and;
- Additional staff is needed to help engage with parents so as to continue with holding play events for children in their communities.

Committee Members also received the Ceredigion Play Action Plan report 2019/2020 before its submission to Cabinet.

Ceredigion Council's 3rd Play Sufficiency Assessment was completed in 2019; the assessment and accompanying action plan was approved by Cabinet in March 2019 before being submitted to Welsh Government.

The Action Plan had a number of priority actions clustered into eight specific areas. Good progress is being made with 90% of the actions within the plan; 5% is completed and 5% not yet started. The action areas had all been given a Red/Amber/Green (RAG) status. Eighteen of the twenty actions are in progress (Amber); one is not progressed (Red) and one is completed (Green).

Although this is an annual plan (as required by Welsh Government), it was proposed that the actions within the plan would continue to March 2022 when the next Play Sufficiency Assessment was due to be completed.

OUTCOME AND/OR IMPACT

Members agreed to recommend that Cabinet:

1. *Approve the progress report of the Ceredigion Action Plan 2019/2020 prior to its submission to Welsh Government; subject to consideration of the following:*
    - *That a Member of Staff is appointed to assist the Officer in her role. This would enable further communication with Communities in relation to the current 89 play areas and to explore other relevant opportunities.*

Cabinet approved the Ceredigion Action Plan 2019/2020. It was noted that the Committee's suggestion was not appropriate to be considered by Cabinet as it relates to an operational matter.

The Mid Wales Joint Health and Social Care Joint Scrutiny Group established continues to scrutinise the Mid Wales Joint Health and Social Care Board, previously the Mid Wales Healthcare Collaborative. Meetings were held on the afternoon following each meeting of the Board meetings. The Chair, County Director and Programme Manager, and Lead Directors attended those meetings. This is a Joint Scrutiny Working Group comprising Local Authority Members from Gwynedd County Council and Ceredigion County Council and previously Powys County Council. Powys, however, withdrew its Membership at the end of 2019.

OUTCOME AND/OR IMPACT

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

Learning Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee

The Learning Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee met on 6 occasions during the municipal year 2019/2020.

Key issues considered

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 of the Corporate Director on the Restructure of the Music Services which had previously been considered by the Committee. The recommendations previously made to Cabinet were that due consideration is given to this Service and no decision(s) are made before allowing adequate time to fully explore all options, and to work with the Music Service, as well as the Friends of the Music Service, so that a mutually beneficial resolution can be achieved; and that Members of the Learning Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee are kept fully informed throughout this process. Members were informed of the current consultation that was being undertaken and the number of expressions of interest that had been received.

OUTCOME AND/OR IMPACT

It was agreed that the next meeting of the Committee would be arranged after 3.30pm enabling participating pupils to address the Committee with their views on the provision of the music service. It was also noted that if the Meeting was held at the end of September/beginning of October an accurate and up to date figure on the uptake for the service would be available.

A further report on the Music Service was provided to the Committee when the restructuring process had come to an end. It was reported that the Service had carried out a Consultation with staff over recent months, and pupils had committed and paid for the lessons for the year. A positive meeting had also been held with Friends of Ceredigion Music Service, and they had welcomed the new model. A representative of the Youth Council provided evidence to the Committee and stated that the model had been welcomed by them and the opportunities provided.

Consideration was given to the progress report made following the recommendations within the independent investigation report in relation to Ysgol Uwchradd Aberteifi. Members had the opportunity to have their questions answered.

The Committee were kept updated on the Additional Learning Needs transformation programme. Changes in the legislation and ALN code required planning for future provision for learners aged 0 to 25 with ALN in Ceredigion.

Consideration was given to Ceredigion's primary school tracking tool: EhedLin (Flight Path).

Members received an update on the consultation on the options to develop or relocate Theatr Felinfach. A non-statutory consultation to gather the views of the users and the beneficiaries of Theatr Felinfach was undertaken following a feasibility study and discussions held between Ceredigion County Council, the Arts Council and Theatr Felinfach. The consultation sought views on three possible options for the theatre. A summary of the comments received and the Service's responses were presented to the Committee.

OUTCOME AND/OR IMPACT

The Committee agreed to recommend to Cabinet that they support Option 2: the possibility of relocating the Theatre if an area school is built in the Aeron Valley, so that the theatre can share a site with the area school.

Consideration was given to the report of the Chief Education Officer on the 2019 GCSE and A level provisional results. There is now emphasis that the analysis of a school's performance in external examination is based on more than one indicator. The range of performance indicators were presented to the Committee. An analysis of the performance, on a county-by county and school-by-school basis was undertaken. A question was raised in relation to no data on looked after children. It was explained that if there are under 5 pupils in the cohort they do not get reported as it may be possible to identify them.

OUTCOME AND/OR IMPACT

A paper on the educational achievements of looked after children was presented to a joint meeting of the Healthier Communities and Learning Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee which contained data over a few years in order that individuals can not be identified.

The final results were presented later in the municipal year to confirm the results that had been shared earlier in the year had been validated.

A joint Committee meeting was held with Healthier Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee to discuss the budget for Look after Children.

A report on the developments relating to the work carried out on promoting Pupil Voice within Ceredigion was presented to the Committee. Promoting Pupil Voice is one of the main Rights from the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) Article 12: "Your right to say your opinion and be listened to".

Consequently, pupil voice is an essential element in all that they do within Learning Services. Since January 2019, responsibility for further developing the Pupil Voice within Ceredigion Schools has been given to the Senior Advisory Teacher for Wellbeing and Behaviour, to ensure that it has a clear focus in strategic planning. At Secondary level, schools use the SHERN Pupil self-assessment tool to measure pupil's wellbeing. A summary report of findings is provided to each school and the Local Authority. The last report, published in Autumn 2018, noted that only 46% of pupils in Ceredigion felt that their opinions/ideas were taken seriously. Consequently, further developing the pupil voice is a target within the current Business Plan for Wellbeing within Learning Services.

Each Primary and Secondary School operates a School Council and pupils are elected following a democratic process of school elections. Monitoring their effectiveness is now a focus for the Authority. A Youth Forum currently exists for 16 to 25 year olds co-ordinated by the Youth Service. Ceredigion Pupil Voice forums have been organized for Primary Key Stage 2 Pupils (7-11) and Secondary Pupils (Year 7 to 10). There are three forums for the Primary age group: North, South and Mid County, made up of 2 elected members from each school. In the Secondary age group, there is one forum made up of 3 elected members from each school. In July 2019, the first forums were held. The topics that the pupils would like to focus on during the academic year 2019/20 were reported to the Committee.

OUTCOME AND/OR IMPACT

As reducing plastic was a common theme a Councillor stated that they would not want to see milk being stopped in schools in order to achieve this. Officers confirmed that this would not happen and that they are currently in discussions with Food Centre Wales regarding the possibility of creating recyclable packaging for use with a local milk supplier.

The Committee were kept informed on the Curriculum for Wales. On 30 April 2019, the Welsh Government published a draft version of the new curriculum. The consultation period began on 30 April and ended on 19 July 2019. The final version of the new curriculum will be published in January 2020 and will become statutory in 2022. The Welsh Government expects schools to experiment with the new curriculum before it becomes statutory. This significant curricular change created a significant training agenda which was delivered.

Consideration was given to the report and presentation on the school support categorisation system 2019-20. The National School Categorisation System aims to provide a clear structure for reviewing what additional support schools require in order to drive improvements. The Committee were taken through the three steps of the system – Outcome indicators, Improvement Capacity and Support Category and told where the final categorisation outcomes are published.

Consideration was given to the report of the Chief Education Officer on Estyn inspections of schools and non-maintained settings. Estyn conduct a core inspection in every school as stated in Section 28 of the 2005 Education Act. The Committee received information on the schools and non-maintained settings that were inspected in Ceredigion during the academic year 2018-19.

Consideration was given to the report on the Corporate Director on the 21st Century Band A Review. The 21st Century Welsh Government Band A schools programme had enabled Ceredigion to deliver five projects between 2014 and 2019:

- Ysgol Bro Teifi
- Ysgol Dyffryn Cledlyn
- Ysgol Henry Richard
- Ysgol Llanilar
- Ysgol Comins Coch

Information was presented detailing the projects delivered and the impact on educational standards and pupil numbers and summarising the facilities provided.

The 21st Century Band B initiative had commenced and all identified projects will be delivered by 2024. They include:

- Extension and remodelling at Cardigan Primary School
- Extension and remodelling at Cardigan Secondary School
- New area school in the Aeron Valley

OUTCOME AND/OR IMPACT

Procurement workshops would be held with local contractors in relation to tendering for Council contracts which includes school building work and refurbishments.

The Committee requested comparison data of classroom assistant numbers in schools between 2017-18 and 2018-19 and received an explanation as to how the grant is used.

Committee Members were requested to consider the service areas budget and the Council's Fees and Charges within the Committee's remit for 2020/21.

OUTCOME AND/OR IMPACT

Budget implications had been considered throughout the year.

Consideration was given to the Childcare Sufficiency Assessment (CSA) 2017-2022. The report had been presented in order to scrutinise the amended CSA Action Plan in line with the changes by Welsh Government Policies and to recommend its approval to Cabinet.

OUTCOME AND/OR IMPACT

Recommended the amended CSA 2017-2022 Action Plan for approval by Cabinet; and that an update report be presented at a future meeting; and to consider the possibility of promoting the childcare sector to attract males to the profession.

The ERW Interim Managing Director, Andi Morgan, attended the meeting to deliver a presentation on an update on ERW.

OUTCOME AND/OR IMPACT

The Committee requested that financial details would be included in future reports.

Feedback from the ERW Scrutiny Councillor Group and the work of the workstreams was reported throughout the year.

During consideration of the minutes from the ERW Scrutiny Councillor Group at the end of the 2019/2020 municipal year it was noted that Neath Port Talbot had served notice of its intention to withdraw from ERW effective from 01 April 2020. Due to Neath Port Talbot's imminent withdrawal, members of the Committee questioned whether it was timely for Ceredigion to review its membership of ERW. It was noted that a year's notice in advance of the end of the financial year was required to withdraw from ERW, i.e. that Ceredigion would need to serve notice before 31 March 2020 if it intended withdrawing from ERW effective from 1 April 2021. Several Members stated that they were unconvinced of the value gained by the Council, its schools and pupils as a result of its membership of ERW. Council officers referred to a few examples of valuable ERW input in secondary schools at subject level and leadership support.

OUTCOME AND/OR IMPACT

Due to Neath Port Talbot's imminent withdrawal from ERW, the Committee recommended that Cabinet reviews its membership of ERW and considers issuing notice of Ceredigion's withdrawal by 31 March 2020 if it considered that ERW was not delivering effective school improvement services to schools in Ceredigion for the benefit of learners.

Cabinet agreed in line with the ERW legal agreement, that the Leader writes to the ERW Joint Committee (and the relevant Local Authorities) to serve notice that Ceredigion will withdraw from ERW on 31st March 2021; and that prior to the end of the notice period a detailed and current review of ERW impact on school improvement and value for money be undertaken and presented to Learning Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee and to Cabinet for final decision.

Workstreams
The workstreams comprise of members from the Learning Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee and the Chairman attends and contribute to all three.

Safonau Mewn Ysgolion/

Standards and Schools

Anghenion Dysgu Ychwanegol, Cynhwysiant a Lles/

ALN, Inclusion & Wellbeing

Ymgysylltu Ieuenctid ac Addysg Barhaus/

Youth Engagement & Continuing Education

<u>OUTCOME AND/OR IMPACT</u>
Workstreams meet regularly to raise awareness, training purposes and to identify aspects which require further scrutiny as part of the forward work programme planning process.

Standards and Schools		
Meinir Ebbsworth / Mary Davies		
Met	Reported back	Subject
29/01/19	17/07/19	Analysis of Ceredigion Secondary Schools' post-16 provision
03/04/19	17/07/19	Update on the work to develop new ways of providing a music service in Ceredigion.
05/07/19	17/07/19	The New Curriculum
02/12/19	09/01/20	Monitoring School Standards: Ysgol Dyffryn Cledlyn, Ysgolion Mynach, Pontrhydfendigaid a Syr John Rhys, Ysgol Henry Richard
03/02/20	09/04/20 – postponed due to Covid-19	School services self-evaluation process

ALN Inclusion and Wellbeing		
Gillian Evans		
Met	Reported back	Subject
19/05/19	17/07/19	Ceredigion Interventions, Adverse Childhood Experiences, Additional Learning Needs Transformation
27/11/19	09/01/20	ALN Transformation System, Elective Home Education
28/02/20	09/04/20 – postponed due to Covid-19	Wellbeing provision in Ceredigion schools and the ALN Transformation System

Porth Cymorth Cynnar, Community Wellbeing and Learning		
Elen James		
Met	Reported back	Subject
14/01/19	17/07/19	Update on work of individual services within Lifelong Learning and Culture and what has been achieved over recent months.
23/05/19	17/07/19	The Youth Support Grant 2019-2020 and the Alternative Curriculum
07/02/20	09/04/20 – postponed due to Covid-19	**Ysgol Cwrtnewydd** - alternative curriculum provision for years 9,10 and 11

It was agreed that the Youth, Engagement and Continuing Education workstream would be renamed Porth Cymorth Cynnar, Community Wellbeing and Learning.

Thriving Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee

The Thriving Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee met on 8 occasions during the municipal year 2019/2020.

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 regular Committee meeting as a standing item on each agenda.

The Curator of Ceredigion Museum attended a meeting of the Committee to outline the content of the Final Evaluation Report of the New Approaches Project on the Ceredigion Museum.

The Committee considered the Ceredigion Local Development Plan Preferred Strategy prior to its public consultation.

OUTCOME AND/OR IMPACT

The Committee agreed to recommend to Cabinet to approve the content of the Ceredigion Local Development Plan's Preferred Strategy for Public Consultation in July 2019, subject to providing an executive summary setting out the salient points; due the size of the LDP documents presented.

The Committee considered the Strategy for Open Space. Consideration was given to the Report upon the proposals and ideas for the use of the Promenade and other Council land. The Clerk for Aberystwyth Town Council had made a request to speak at the meeting using the Public Engagement Protocol; and was granted 5 minutes by the Chairman to address the Committee with their views. The Committee were asked to consider three proposals.

OUTCOME AND/OR IMPACT

The Committee recommended to Cabinet that Proposal A, B and C be agreed subject to the following:-
(i) that the sale of local produce be encouraged wherever possible;
(ii) to delete the requirement for recyclable products used for food and beverages to be branded with the licence holders name so they can be held accountable for their waste. Members felt this would be unequitable;
(iii) the report refers to additional bins being provided – Members agreed that this needs to be further explored e.g. who supplies them
(iv)that the Welsh Language was appropriately included in the Estates Strategy for a more vibrant promenade, particularly in relation to any licensee signage. There was potential for vehicular and pedestrian conflict and other health and safety issue that the Committee would also wish to see adequately addressed;
(v)that the old Welsh historic cultural tradition was retained as far it is possible; and;
(vi)that the Corporate Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee continues to consider and monitor this work as part of the Estates Task and Finish Group and following the trial period, a further report be presented to Committee prior to any decisions. This would allow Ceredigion's remaining seaside towns and villages to be included in the review before any decisions are made.

Coastal Erosion and Flood Incidents were considered by the Committee as they had been identified on the Corporate Risk Register as one of the major risks facing the county. A report on Aberaeron and Aberystwyth Coastal Defence Schemes was presented to the Committee.

The Committee noted the work being undertaken in relation to coastal monitoring; and the progress being made in relation to the development of Coastal Defence Schemes at Aberaeron and Aberystwyth.

OUTCOME AND/OR IMPACT

An update at 6 monthly intervals will be provided to the Committee on the progress and development of both schemes at Aberaeron and Aberystwyth, together with any updates on the development of schemes at Borth to Ynyslas (Phase 3) and Llangrannog when Welsh Government identify funding in order to progress the development of those 2 schemes.

The Committee agreed to recommend to Cabinet:

i. *The whole coast is important and for officers to explore ways of liaising with private land owners to enter discussions as to how the whole coast line can be managed.*
ii. *A letter is sent to BID requesting a contribution to the Aberystwyth Coastal Defence Scheme as they will benefit from the work undertaken.*
iii. *A letter is sent to Welsh Government to express that they should be responsible for 100% of the cost of the coastal defence schemes as it is of benefit for the whole of Wales and the cost should not fall on those Authorities that have coastline.*

iv. *Explore options of combining renewable energy with coastal defence schemes.*

The draft Public Toilet Strategy for Ceredigion was considered by the Committee following a public consultation.

OUTCOME AND/OR IMPACT
The Committee agreed to recommend to Cabinet:

i. *Improved signage for public toilets from the public highway;*
ii. *The committee support the implementation of a fee for using the public toilets to raise revenue to maintain these facilities and support access to new toilet provision where they are required;*
iii. *It is essential that public toilets are provided along strategic travel routes;*
iv. *A letter is sent to Welsh Government to enquire if the £500 grant for local service providers to offer their toilet facilities free of charge to members of the public be reinstated;*
v. *Officers have delegated power to approve the installation of paddle gates in public toilets where officers deem appropriate.*

The Ceredigion's Waste Management Strategy 2019-25 was considered in order to provide an update on the production of the new waste strategy for Ceredigion and propose short-term changes to enable strategy development.

OUTCOME AND/OR IMPACT
The Committee agreed to:
a. Support further development of the draft strategy
b. Support the short term proposals in relation to HWS contracts
c. Note the update in relation to the HWS

The Committee requested an update on Pay and Display Car Parks and the Civil Parking Enforcement approach to monitoring and enforcing parking restrictions at events. The Committee's views were sought prior to any further detailed investigation and proposal development in relation to possible changes to the fees and charges for Council managed Pay and Display car parks. In addition, the report outlined the proposals for the future use of Pendre Car Park.

OUTCOME AND/OR IMPACT
The Committee agreed further work is undertaken with regards the proposals suggested in terms of the pay and display car parks and that the required consultation processes in respect of the Pendre Car Park proposal are pursued.

The LDP Annual Monitoring Report for 2018/19 was presented to the Committee prior to its submission to Welsh Government. It was noted that areas of concern included:

- Delivery of the Settlement Strategy within the plan period;
- Housing Land Supply
- Delivery of Allocated Housing Sites; and
- Housing Development in the right locations

OUTCOME AND/OR IMPACT

The Committee agreed to make the following comments and recommendations for the replacement plan to Cabinet:

1. *Austerity remains an issue within the County in terms of the building and sale of property;*
2. *Concerns were raised over the National Development Framework that will be published in 2020 which identifies where nationally significant developments should take place, where the key growth areas are and what infrastructure and services are needed. The main focus has been on the South and North corridors within the documents. The Committee requests that Cabinet emphasises to Welsh Government the importance that Mid Wales and rural areas are not forgotten.*
3. *Housing is linked to the economy, it is imperative that Ceredigion is developed appropriately to ensure that people remain within the County.*
4. *Ensure there is sufficient social housing for the elderly, disabled and young families to enable them to remain in their local communities.*
5. *Ensure mechanisms for maintaining play areas within housing developments are in place.*
6. *Ensure mechanisms are in place to bring empty homes back into use.*

The Committee established a task and finish group to assist with developing the Economic Strategy 2020-2035. The group met on three occasions. The aim of the group was to ensure scrutiny input from an early stage of developing the strategy. There was a clear mandate for developing the strategy:

- Corporate Priority #1: Boosting the Economy
- PSB Priority: transforming economic prospects
- Shared regional priority Mid Wales partnership

OUTCOME AND/OR IMPACT

The role of the task and finish group was:

- *To feed into the development of the strategy*
- *To review progress*
- *To provide a scrutiny role in the development of the strategy.*
- *Identify any gaps.*
- *Provide feedback to the Scrutiny group.*

The Thriving Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee at its meeting agreed to recommend to Cabinet the content of the draft strategy and that it should proceed to formal public consultation.

The Committee considered the report on Ash dieback. The purpose of the report was to communicate to the committee the potentially significant risk posed by ash dieback and request support in engaging asset holders in developing a Corporate Ash Dieback Action Plan (ADAP) and thereafter implementing this plan. The Council has a duty of care to ensure that its trees do not pose an unreasonable risk to people or property. Meeting this duty of care will require pro-active work on identifying, risk-assessing and managing any ash trees in Council ownership or management. The

Committee acknowledged the significance of the disease and the risk it posed to the authority.

OUTCOME AND/OR IMPACT

The Committee agreed to recommend to Cabinet:

I. the drafting of a Corporate Ash Dieback Action Plan (ADAP);

II. the Ash Dieback Action Plan (ADAP) comes back to the Thriving Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee for consideration including financial detail;

III. To acknowledge the additional resources required to achieve this and lobby financial support from Welsh Government through the WLGA and/or CSS (Wales);

IV. That officers investigate the appointment of a Corporate Ash Dieback Officer position;

V. To agree to the addition of basic information on ADB for Ceredigion residents on the Council website following legal advice;

VI. To continue with the issuing of S154 notices for ash trees with more than 50% crown dieback where a risk has been identified;

VII. Explore the opportunity of establishing a team within the authority with the appropriate machinery to undertake the felling work due to potentially being more cost-effective instead of contracting out the work. The bi-product could be used for biomass therefore providing an additional saving to the authority.

VIII. Work with farming unions to provide advice to private land owners;

IX. Remain in discussions with other authorities.

Cabinet noted the recommendations.

The Committee received an update on Transport Procurement in order to update Members on the transport procurement process and propose some rationalisation and improvements following previous work undertaken by the Committee.

OUTCOME AND/OR IMPACT

The Committee agreed to support the proposals presented for consideration and approval by the CPTU Board subject to the addition of the condition that all contracts for buses, cars and taxi services must state that their vehicles must be under 20 years of age.

The Final Investigation Reports into Storm Callum Flood Event was presented to the Committee.

The Committee considered the actions carried out by the Plastic Free Task & Finish Group. It was noted that the use of plastic milk bottles would be investigated in the near future along with cleaning materials used in offices.

The Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment 2019 was presented to the Committee.

OUTCOME AND/OR IMPACT
The Committee agreed to recommend to Cabinet that the Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment 2019 is submitted to Welsh Government for Agreement with grave reservations of the legislation.

Committee Members were requested to consider the service areas budget and the Council's Fees and Charges within the Committee's remit for 2020/21.

OUTCOME AND/OR IMPACT
Budget implications had been considered throughout the year.

The development of the high-level strategic direction for the Highways Asset Management Plan 2020-2025 (HAMP) was considered by the Committee. Ceredigion County Council, as the local highway authority, is responsible for the maintenance and upkeep of 2,151km of carriageway, 212km of footways, 983 bridges and retaining structures and 6,877 street lights with a combined gross replacement value of over £1.6 billion. The County's highway network is of significant importance to the public, businesses and visitors and its condition vital to the economic and social prosperity of Ceredigion.

OUTCOME AND/OR IMPACT
Following discussions the Committee agreed to recommend to Cabinet that there is an increase in the allocated budget for highways maintenance. This would enable the time scales for improvements to be reduced. The quality of the highway is critical in improving the economy of Ceredigion and is an important factor within the development of the current Economic Strategy.

Performance Board

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

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

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

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

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