

Carmarthenshire County Council Leader's Annual Report 2016-17



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introduction

The annual report presents an opportunity each year for the Leader to reflect upon the achievements of the council over the previous 12 months. But this year's report is slightly different in that it draws to a conclusion not only the last municipal year, but also the five year term of the council. Furthermore it brings to a close the first period in which Plaid Cymru has led the Council, in collaboration with our colleagues from the Independent Group.

In many ways the recent elections have brought about the end of an era with so many long serving councillors from each of the three main groups retiring from the council after many years of public service. A number of other senior councillors have also seen their terms of office brought to an end, perhaps a little more abruptly than they might have hoped or expected. What they all have in common is their desire to serve their local communities and I would like to take advantage of this opportunity to pay tribute to their contribution to the work of the council over the years.

I feel I must pay tribute to one departing councillor in particular, one of my predecessors as council leader, Councillor Meryl Gravell OBE. Meryl served as Leader of the Council for 13 years and whatever our political differences I have always respected her commitment and dedication to the council and her sincere desire to make Carmarthenshire a better place for all its residents.

As Leader for the last two years, I hope that I have been successful in picking up that baton and taking the council forward. From the outset I made two very distinct promises namely that we would focus on regeneration across the county and that we would protect our front line services. The Executive Board, comprised of Plaid Cymru and Independent members in equal numbers, fully embraced my vision for the county and I would like to thank them all for their individual contributions to what has been a hugely successful year for the council. Together we have been true to those guiding principles and we have restored Carmarthenshire's good name and set our county on the road to a prosperous and exciting future. All this has been achieved in the face of savage cut-backs in public spending by the Welsh and UK governments.

Securing the Swansea Bay City Deal was unquestionably the highlight of the last year. It is the biggest ever investment in south west Wales. In March the Prime Minister and Wales' First Minister met with myself and the Leaders of Swansea, Neath Port Talbot and Pembrokeshire councils to sign up for the £1.3 billion deal that will transform the economic landscape of the area, boost the local economy by £1.8 billion and generate 10,000 new jobs over the next 15 years. Carmarthenshire will benefit from three specific projects: a wellness and Life Science Village in Llanelli, a creative industry project at Yr Egin in Carmarthen and a skills and talent initiative which will support skills development for the whole region.

Over the last 12 months the council has:

- Invested many millions of pounds in exciting projects to create hundreds of well-paid jobs to help keep our young people in our county
- Launched 1,000 affordable home programme, including building 60 council houses.
- Kept the council tax rise to 2.5%
- Protected schools from real cuts to funding
- Protected Social Services and found extra money for essential highway repairs
- Given our lowest-paid staff a well-deserved 2.6% pay rise

All this has been achieved at a time of severe austerity imposed by the UK Government and without a penny more from the Welsh Government to cover inflation, costs and increased wage bills.

Of course there were two events in the last year that will have a significant and long lasting effect on local government in Wales. The first was the Welsh Assembly elections in May 2016 which may have left many people underwhelmed! But there was one particularly important result that saw the minister for local government lose his seat. The result brought an abrupt end to proposal for the wholesale reorganisation of local government and introduced in its place a far greater emphasis on collaboration between councils. Carmarthenshire has fully embraced this concept and the success of the Swansea Bay City Deal speaks eloquently of our determination to work closely with neighbouring authorities.

Secondly there was the decision taken by the British people to leave the European Union. Carmarthenshire County Council has benefitted enormously from EU funding over many years and the result of last year's referendum is likely to leave us with a funding shortfall. We will have to wait and see if the government in Westminster will live up to its promises to plug the gap.

I am proud of what we have achieved in Carmarthenshire in just two short years. But we shan't rest on our laurels – there is much more to do. I am confident that our new executive board will be take up the challenge and will press on with the work of creating more jobs, raising living standards, providing affordable homes and making our communities even better places in which to live and work.

These are not empty promises. We've already started on ambitious plans and projects to turn our vision for Carmarthenshire into a reality for the present and future generations.



resources

For a number of years the Authority has acknowledged the difficult funding scenario that it has faced, and has recognised the need to do things differently and prioritise how it wishes to spend its increasingly scarce resources. We have always been able to set a balanced budget despite decreasing resources, whilst at the same time maintaining service standards to a large degree.

Once again this year we have received a settlement for only one year and although for this year we have been fortunate to have a cash standstill settlement, it is forecasted that negative settlements will return to Local Government in future years.

Over the coming three years reductions of £23m will need to be delivered assuming the reduction in Local Government funding continues as forecast within our Medium Term Financial Plan.

In addressing the continued pressure and real term reduction in funding, at the same time ensuring that Council Tax increases were, as far as possible minimised, we have had to continue to seek efficiencies in the way it delivers services and unfortunately in some instances looked at the level of service provision itself. This year's consultation process has been wide and varied using mixed methods of approach to ascertain the views on the budget. This has allowed significant debate on the budget and I would like to express my thanks to all who took part in the consultation or responded to the surveys.

As a result of the consultation, the neutral settlement, and changes in the validation assumptions we were able to revisit some of the savings proposals and also inject an additional £1.76m into the Delegated Schools Budget which together with the investment of an Efficiency Schools Officer put schools in a strong position to continue to provide a high level education service moving forward.

Throughout the budget process we have had three clear objectives in mind:

- 1 to prepare the Authority for any reductions in funding that may lie ahead
- 2 to ensure as far as possible that service levels and standards are maintained and
- 3 recognising that our citizens are also finding it hard in the current climate to minimise as far as possible any increase in the council tax.

Dyfed Pension Fund Investments

Following HM Government's approval of the Wales Investment Pool in November 2016, a Financial Conduct Authority regulated Third Party Pool Operator will be appointed in summer 2017 to manage the investments and the reduction of investment management expenses for all 8 Wales funds. Through an Inter Authority Agreement, the legal framework for establishing a Joint Governance Committee has been approved and an officer working group has been established to act as advisors to the JGC.

Carmarthenshire County Council has been selected as the Host Authority to provide administrative and secretarial support and implement decisions made by the Joint Governance Committee. Over the last 3 years the value of the Fund has increased from £1.7bn to £2.2bn and the funding level has risen from 89% to 97%.

Promoting The Welsh Language

Promoting the Welsh language in our county has continued during the year, and the publication of a Promotion Strategy at county level, as part of the Welsh Language Standards, has set ourselves a clear direction and challenge for the next few years. We have ensured that this Strategy builds upon the work accomplished following the 2011 Census results, while considering policy developments on a national level. I wish to thank members of the Member Advisory Panel and the Strategic County Forum for the Welsh language for their positive comments when the Strategy was being prepared, and it's heartening to see the new opportunities on the horizon as we collaborate between sectors.

Likewise, the work of introducing the Welsh Language Standards has been positive, and Council departments continue to improve as far as workforce and service planning is concerned. Introducing the Standards has presented a golden opportunity for us to look at our work and where we are at it in regard to ensuring compliance. Over the next year we will continue to raise awareness of the Standards and encourage our customers to use their Welsh when contacting us.



Community Safety

There has been an increase of 5.7% in total recorded crime since the same period last year, from 8,160 to 8,624. The most prevalent crime type recorded is Violence Against the Person, which accounts for 31% of all crime in Carmarthenshire. Increases in these offences have been seen in 41 of the 42 police forces in England and Wales. The continued drive to accurately record crime is still making comparisons over time difficult. However, it is felt that the increases are most likely due to administrative and process changes rather than changes in offending behaviour.

Partners continue to work together to address key areas of community safety including substance misuse, counter-terrorism, anti-social behaviour and crime.

Awareness continues to be raised in local communities by officers, the Carmarthenshire News, media coverage and the use of social media of key crime issues and crime prevention messages. During the year there has been a focus on scams, road safety, domestic abuse - particularly at the New Year's Day rugby game and mascot race and marking 'White Ribbon Day' - and violent crime with the 10 year anniversary of the attack on Paul Pugh and success of his 'Paul's Pledge' campaign to reduce alcohol-related violence. General crime prevention advice has also been given on home security to encourage residents to take action to prevent themselves becoming a victim of crime.

regeneration

As I mentioned in my introduction, one of the most significant events in the modern history of Carmarthenshire County Council occurred in March of this year when the British Prime Minister, Wales' First Minister, the Secretary of State for Wales and the Leaders of Carmarthenshire, Swansea, Neath Port Talbot and Pembrokeshire County Councils met at the Liberty Stadium for the signing a City Deal for the Swansea Bay City Region.

It is a deal that gives our citizens a reason to believe in a brighter, more prosperous future, our youngsters a reason to come home from their studies knowing there will be opportunities and quality jobs and our businesses the confidence to invest a region that is regenerating inwardly and looking out to a global market with new ideas and innovation across so many sectors as we all embrace wholeheartedly a deal that devolves both ownership of and responsibility for regeneration to the Regional level and the City Deal.

The deal was put together in the context of the regional economy where our GVA has fallen from 90% of the UK average to 77% over the last thirty years. We are determined to overturn that trend in our Region and with that in mind we set our deal in place with very clear objectives around economic growth which involved regionality GVA and jobs across the region.

The Deal involves a total investment of some **£1.3 billion** over a period of 15 years. This consists of £241m of central government funding to be split between the two governments, £360m of other public sector funding and £673m of private sector contributions which makes up the total investment package. This investment will deliver up to 10,000 new jobs for the region resulting in a GVA uplift of £1.8b.

The Life Science and well-being village will involve the development of an extensive area of regeneration land to the south of Llanelli. The village will bring together business development, life-science research and innovation, sports and leisure and training with integrated health and social care provision to achieve transformational improvements in health and wellbeing. The total investment is likely to be in the region of £200million with a projected 1,853 jobs being created.

The Deal proposal in its preparation has been a long haul and a mammoth task. Thanks are due to officers from across the four Authorities of Swansea Carmarthen Neath Port Talbot and Pembrokeshire from the Universities Swansea University and Trinity St Davids and Abertawe Bro Morgannwg and Hywel Dda Health Boards who have given of their total commitment to this City Deal and to the members and officers of the Swansea Bay City Region Board and of course to elected members across the four Authorities for their commitment and support to the deal. We decided to do it ourselves - not through consultants and the burden of the work has fallen as additional work and endeavour of officers in addition to their day job. It has been a huge effort and we are deeply indebted to them all for their unstinted effort and enthusiasm. This all shows what is possible when we work collaboratively across the region.

The Deal, as I've said, is vital for us here in South West Wales in economic terms but it is not an end in itself nor do we see it as such. The originality and innovation proposed will be the catalyst for so much more in our region as we build on these projects and look outwards towards global markets.

Wales has its very own ground breaking legislation in the Well Being of Future Generations Act which requires us in our policies and ambitions to incorporate seven key principles or well being goals and adhere to five ways of working. This Deal is a perfect example of the five ways of working promoted by the Act and over the 15 year programme it provides an opportunity to address the persistent

challenges that we face in climate change, poverty inequality jobs and skills and to accomplish that in a transformational and preventative way and maximise our well-being goals under the Act through this major public investment programme.

I have already thanked the many officials from both the Welsh and the British Governments who have co-operated fully and engaged with us as we put together a City deal that works and promises so much for our region. But I would like to reserve my particular thanks to our own Chief Executive, Mark James, who was the lead Chief Exec on the pitch team. He has travelled between London and Cardiff ad infinitum over these last six months and has been engineering this deal working closely with officials from both Welsh and UK Governments. We owe him a huge debt of thanks.

The Cross Hands East Strategic Employment Site

The Cross Hands East Strategic Employment Site was completed and officially opened on 6th October 2016 in the presence of the Welsh Government Minister Jane Hutt A.M. Following the opening, developers had been invited to presentations and flythrough video of both the Cross hands and Dafen development land held later that day in The Beacon. Over 30 developers attended the day and a number of companies have shown an interest in developing on the Cross Hands East Site.

Phase 1 of Cross Hands East encompasses 9 plots of land for development with the potential to create 500-700 jobs in the following sectors :-

- Energy & Environment
- Creative Industries
- Advanced Manufacturing
- Financial & Professional
- Agri-Food Technology

The total cost of the infrastructure project, including the access road from the A48 was some £14.5 million funded via ERDF (£6.7m), the Welsh Government (£2.16m Transport & Western Valleys funding), Joint Venture (£0.54m) and our own contribution of £5m.

The County Council has secured funding for the completion of phase 2 of the strategic employment site which itself will provide a further 17,500 sq/m of employment floor-space across 9ha of land. Discussions with Welsh Government enabled the Phase 2 Cross Hands East site to be included within the Welsh Government's Strategic Site Programme alongside three other sites in Wales which is part funded by the European Structural Funds Programme.

Ammanford and the Amman Valley

I have been particularly concerned about the importance of creating opportunities for rejuvenating the economy of the Amman Valley over the last year and I recognised the need to set up task force to take forward the work of the town partnership that came to an end in Sept 2016. The task force has met on a number of occasions and has focussed on taking the town forward. The Former Police Station site, which was acquired some years ago by the County Council, has now been sold to a private developer with the aim of construction of a two storey building on the site to provide commercial/retail opportunities on the ground floor and four 2 flats on first floor to meet local demand. The proposal also includes the conversion of the existing Court House Building to office

suites. The Executive Board agreed to allow the use of the capital receipt that will be generated to provide a junction improvement to the adjacent Margaret Street to ease congestion at peak times.

Work was recently completed to relocate the Carreg Aman car park entrance in order to enable a controlled pelican crossing to be installed on Ffordd William Walker following a road safety review.

A property development fund was made available for Ammanford – Ammanford Regeneration Development Fund with a modest budget of £300,000. The fund was publicised in the local media and applications were invited for the redevelopment or refurbishment of existing vacant properties or new developments to create commercial space for job creation.

Three Stage 1 applications have been received and have been approved to progress to Stage 2. It is anticipated that work will commence in relation to these development within the current financial year and would create over 6,000 sq.ft. commercial space and the potential of creating 33 new jobs.

Opportunity Street, Llanelli (final year 3 of 3)

Renovation works to buildings 10 and 12 Stepney Street commenced in June 2016 with local contractor Lloyd and Gravell were appointed to renovate and create two new commercial spaces on the ground floor and four new two bedroom apartments accommodating 1st and 2nd floors. Works will continue into the summer of 2017, along with works to 48 Stepney Street, before spaces are presented to the market for rent.

Additional funding by Welsh Government was confirmed earlier this year for the acquisition of targeted buildings in Market Street and Park Street. The Welsh Government awarded a total of £800,000 whilst we as a Council committed a further £314,000. Negotiations with property owners have progressed very well with eight building acquisitions completed by the end of March. The total value of this project will have been well in excess of £4.3 million and with the acquisition of 15 buildings and 1 development site in the town centre.

Loan funding

Llanelli Town Centre Loan funding is an initiative driven and funded by the Welsh Government with Carmarthenshire County Council securing £750,000 with the potential for it to be re-invested on a case by case basis over a 15 year period. The project was formally launched in July 2016 with three applications received by the September deadline. Following assessment, a preferred project to redevelop the Raffles Building has been allocated, the funding subject to the completion and assessment of a 2nd Stage application. Development proposals involve the demolition of the current building and the creation of a new quality design six story premises with commercial space created on the ground floor and a total of 16 two bed apartments and two penthouses apartments proposed on the upper floors.

Positive discussions with the loan applicant have been ongoing with a planning application being compiled for submission this Summer. Provided the 2nd stage application is approved funding will be released for the project to commence later this year.

Countywide Property Development Fund

This £3 million fund was launched in May 2016 to help us work with developers in order to implement schemes. Over the last 12 months a total of 27 applications have been received requesting £27m worth of funding. Six applicants were prioritised and they are currently working up detailed applications with a view to securing the £3 million fund available. When completed these projects collectively could create as many as 162 jobs across the county.



Carmarthenshire Rural Enterprise Fund

This fund, worth £2million, was also launched in May 2016. The Fund is fully committed at Stage One of the application process five of the original 30 applicants receiving formal offers of grant totalling £420k and construction is underway on four of those five projects. When schemes are completed they have the potential of creating 100 new jobs for rural communities.



Tackling Poverty

Communities First delivers programmes to improve the economic, skills and health of residents in the most deprived areas of the County. During the past year, through the programme 299 adults have achieved accredited qualifications and 377 have received basic skills support. Over 500 adults participated in Promoting Mental Wellbeing programmes. 213 residents have been supported with digital skills and over 350 have accessed financial inclusion support. Through the programme 63 residents have secured employment and hundreds of residents have accessed employment support through 121 mentoring support and jobs clubs.

Volunteers have given over 1500 hours of volunteering directly on the Communities First programmes. Through the Carmarthenshire Council supported Time Credits programme over 1300 volunteers have volunteered over 12,750 hours in the county this year.



Pendine

The new Parry Thomas Commercial Centre was officially opened and is now being filled. All four ground floor commercial units and first floor restaurant are under offer and tenancies have now been signed with three of the five businesses proposing to occupy the units. The next phase of the project will include the new Sands of Speed Visitor centre; Eco Resort; and Visitor Enhancement Project. The project has been selected as one of ten provisional projects that will share the £27 million ERDF funded Visit Wales 'Tourism Attractor' fund. A further £1.5m Grant from Welsh Government's Targeted Match Funding has been secured and we as an authority have committed £2.5m capital funding to the project. Subject to planning and further funding confirmations it is anticipated that construction will commence in April 2018.



Carmarthen Western Link Road

Carmarthen West has the potential to deliver 1,100 houses, the largest housing scheme in Carmarthenshire's local development plan. It will see the creation of a new link road, primary school, employment space, a small retail centre, open space and affordable housing. The £1.3m Carmarthen Western Link Road forms a key element of the development and will link the A40 at Travellers Rest with College Road, providing direct access to the Trunk Road network for St David's Park, S4C's new headquarters and the University of Wales Trinity St David's Carmarthen campus. As a consequence of good progress made on this scheme an additional allocation of £1.19m was awarded to Carmarthenshire Council to continue to progress on this strategically important scheme.

Cross Hands Economic Link Road

£716,000 was awarded for phase 2 of the Cross Hands Economic Link Road. This is a continuation of the road from the point at which it currently intersects with Black Lion Road northwards to join with the A476. This is regarded a transformational scheme of regional importance in the Swansea Bay City Region Local Transport Plan, which could lead to 1,500 new jobs.

Walking and cycling schemes in the county

£830,000 will go towards four walking and cycling schemes in the county. This will include the exciting Towy Valley Path which when complete will link communities, provide a safe accessible transport route along the Towy Valley as well being a huge driver in terms of the tourism/visitor economy with an estimated economic impact of £1-£2m and creating up to 40 new jobs per year. We have also invested in the Amman Valley Cycleway, our Urban linkages programme, and School Transport Routes.

We have an ambitious cycling strategy supported by real investment in infrastructure. Later this year should see the Carmarthen Town velodrome restored to competition standard providing a venue in the county town for national competitions not seen for more than 50 years. In addition, plans are well underway for a half million pound investment in a closed circuit cycle track on the edge of Pembrey Country Park. This will be the first of its kind in Wales and will allow everyone from beginners to professionals to participate in traffic free circuit races in one of our most beautiful parts of the county. Along with plans for a new cycle track in the Towy valley these developments will be a catalyst for Carmarthenshire to become one of the major centres for cycling in Wales.

Ammanford

£400,000 will be invested in a scheme to construct of a major new roundabout at the Tirydail junction which which will ease traffic congestion in the town and will safeguard the viability of Ammanford Town Centre in terms of highway access for years to come.

Collaboration

A tender exercise was recently completed for a Regional Engineering Consultancy Framework (led by NPS) for the South West and Mid Wales region. A team from Carmarthenshire led the regional group which also included Ceredigion County Council, City and County of Swansea Council, Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council, Pembrokeshire County Council and Powys County Council.

The collaboration also extends to engineering construction where again Carmarthenshire are the lead Authority for a South West Wales Regional Framework, and Framework Contractors have delivered key strategic projects such as the Carmarthen Western Link Road and the cycleway alongside the main A4138 which links Llanelli to the M4, and will be assisting in the delivery of advanced works for the ARCH Wellness Centre & Life Science Village.

Safe Routes in Communities

£377,500 has been allocated for a series of road safety and sustainable travel improvements in the Cwmamman and Whitland areas, aimed at encouraging healthy sustainable travel choices by facilitating walking and cycling to and from school as well as within the wider community.

Road Safety Capital grants

We have delivered a £225,900 route scheme on the A484 Carmarthen to Cenarth and delivered a £216,000 route scheme on the A4214/B4304 Llanelli in 2016/17. The Welsh Government's revenue road safety grant delivered road safety education and training through a variety of initiatives.

Bwcabus

During the last year Carmarthenshire County Council has successfully gained further funding to not only continue the existing Bwcabus scheme in Carmarthenshire and Ceredigion but also to extend the scheme to Pembrokeshire and widen the scope of the project. The project will work closely with the local health board, GPs, job centres and health trusts to ensure that stronger working partnerships are created to ensure coordinated delivery in areas such as non-emergency patient transport services and social services. The project will also pilot innovative working methods such as 'zoning GP appointments', thus enabling local people to access health services using public transport.

Biodiversity & Conservation

We are committed to providing and managing suitable habitat for marsh fritillary butterfly through the Caeau Mynydd Mawr Special Area of Conservation project.

Development / Planning Policy

The first Annual Monitoring Report (AMR), covering the year 1 April 2015 to 31 March 2016, was submitted to Welsh Government on 31 October 2016. The report assessed the extent to which the Local Development (LDP) strategy and objectives are being achieved and whether the Plan's policies are functioning effectively. The report also identifies whether any revisions to the Plan are necessary.

Over the last year, Section 106 funds have been used to provide an outdoor 'learning village' at Ysgol Bynea. This included the provision and installation of four 'learning pods' and an outdoor activity / play area. This project received much praise during the school's recent Estyn inspection.

Development

The success of the Property Design team in the delivery of new and improved schools as part of the Modernising Education Programme has been widely recognised. In particular Burry Port School has demonstrated how the well-being of pupils and staff can be enhanced by use of an innovative design, utilising local materials, and taking a whole life cost approach to sustainability, particularly energy usage. This approach has been recognised regionally and nationally, winning numerous awards and commendations.

Parc Howard

I have been particularly keen to support the Council's decision to retain **Parc Howard** in Council ownership. This has led to the Council investing £150,000 into new playground equipment to show its commitment to the park. Phase one consisted of the construction of new infants playground constructed of environmentally friendly organic robinia wood, the first of its kind installed in Wales. Phase two will be shortly submitted for planning consent. By investing in such facilities it is anticipated that it will attract more people into the park as well as tourists, which can only assist in the future sustainability of the park and the local community.

From a collaboration perspective in line with Dwr Cymru's Rainscape project in Llanelli, to reduce the risk of flooding and in order to increase biodiversity in Parc Howard, the Council and Parc Howard Association has partnered with the pupils, staff and governors of Old Road Primary School to work on a project, entitled 'Old Road School Rainscape and Biodiversity Project'. On Thursday, March 9th 2017 a group of Year 3 and 4 pupils planted tree saplings in the park. These included, birch, cherry, hazel and rowan trees which were donated by the Woodland Trust.

Asset Transfer

The Council has continued to work with Community and Town Councils, sporting groups and other community organisations to support the transfer of facilities into local management. Clubs have already been successful with grant applications to improve facilities and local management will ensure that parks and playgrounds will be maintained to suit the particular circumstances of the local area.

Industrial Estates

Our 400+ Industrial units continue to be virtually fully let and providing a flexible source of easy-in, easy-out employment space for local businesses. We have also started work on the **£2 million** project to bring Glanamman Workshops back into use.

During the year we continued through our project contractual requirements to provide work experience for shared apprentices along with offering opportunities through various incentives such as the Communities First LIFT programme for those not in employment.

Four young people secured full time apprenticeships through the “Next Steps” scheme and we have provided work experience for shared apprentices through CCTAL and CYFLE as well as short term placements for Year 10 Secondary School students wishing to pursue a career in construction.

Energy Reduction, Efficiency & Sustainability

We continued with our policy of integrating low and zero carbon technologies into major works projects such as the recently completed PV installations at Ysgol Bro Dinefwr and Ysgol Carreg Hirfaen. We also delivered the first fully accredited Passivhaus school building in Wales at Burry Port School.

We continued to investigate, develop and encourage the “fabric first” approach in order to realise the potential for reduced energy consumption and servicing related issues on new build and major refurbishment schemes in order to reinforce and inform future projects, so as to make a positive difference to the operational ratings, costs and as part of the contribution to our obligations in reducing CO2 emissions, particularly when combined with sustainably and locally sourced raw materials. This resulted in the first fully accredited school building in Wales being delivered at Burry Port School. We are now developing two further schemes adopting the Passivhaus principles alongside the BREEAM Excellent requirements.

Increasing utility costs, plus associated penalties for carbon emissions, require delivery of ever more challenging energy efficiency programmes. We are exploring ambitious energy saving opportunities in our non-domestic buildings, including schools, under the Welsh Government supported Re:fit Cymru programme, which uses energy performance contracts to guarantee projected energy savings. This complements and accelerates our successful corporate energy efficiency programme where £2+ million has been invested in over 200 energy efficiency projects that collectively are projected to save £7+ million / 41,000 tonnes CO2 over the lifetime of the installed technologies.

Fleet

£7.60m has been committed to the investment of replacement fleet with a further £1.8m forecast within the next financial year. All vehicles are equipped with the latest emission technology making Carmarthenshire’s vehicle fleet the most modern, emission friendly fleet in Wales, if not the whole of the UK. We have also reduced the heavy truck numbers in Highways from 35 to 21, which delivered a capital saving of £1.6m.

Street Lighting

The Environment Department is converting its street lighting lanterns to LED units in a bid to reduce energy costs and CO² emissions. By introducing technology that incorporates a gradual dimming regime it is anticipated the project will contribute to deliver efficiency savings of £627,000 year on year upon completion. Although the programme will require a capital investment of £2.9 million the funding stream will utilise a £1.4m interest free loan under the Welsh Government's Invest to Save initiative yielding savings of £410,000 in the first four years alone. A further £217,000 would be saved in the subsequent reduction in maintenance, vehicle and labour costs. Phase 1 of the LED conversion was completed on time and a total of 3400 lanterns have been changed.

Recycling

Sustainability and environmental performance is a priority for the Council and continual improvements are being achieved. In 2015/16 the Council improved on recycling performance again by achieving a recycling rate of 63.52%. This performance was against a statutory target of 58% and placed the Council 4th in overall recycling within Wales. Initial calculations demonstrate further improvements for 2016/17 with estimated recycling increasing to 67.12% in the third quarter of 16/17. In addition to the Council's recycling rate, waste sent to landfill has significantly declined, largely as a result of shipping residual waste to Scandinavia where it is recovered as a fuel for community heating schemes. Just over 5% of municipal waste was sent to landfill in 2015/16 compared with just over 18% the previous year. This makes Carmarthenshire one of the best performing Authorities in Wales for landfill diversion and is expected to further improve for the 2016/17 year.

Waste

In October the County saw the roll out of a new waste collection fleet, the standardisation of vehicles across the County was agreed upon and a new 'pod' type vehicle was procured for collection of food waste and recycling/refuse bags. As a result of this vehicle numbers have been greatly reduced, from 54 vehicles in 2011/2012 to 34 for 2015/16. As part of introducing the new fleet, the refuse collection rounds were rationalised, thereby reducing mileage by 185,000 miles annually, therefore reducing the fleet's carbon footprint significantly. The new rounds were rolled out at the end of October and resulted in changes to the collection arrangements to about 65,000 households of the 87,000 households in the County. The new service has also meant a 63% reduction of households serviced by smaller caged vehicle, increasing efficiency of the service greatly. As a result of this £8m investment in the vehicle fleet the council can boast the most modern, carbon emission friendly vehicle fleet in Wales.

Street Scene and Public Realm

Our Cleansing, Environmental Enforcement, Grounds Maintenance, Flood Management and Municipal Services teams continue to ensure that maintaining, conserving and preserving the local amenity and built environment remains a priority.

The authority has also received notification of the successful Award of Funding in relation to Environment and Sustainable Development Directorate Revenue Grant for Local Authorities in Wales 2017-2018. The £3,702,267 Grant will enable the Council to deliver and improve services concentrating upon Local Environment Quality, Natural Resource Management and Waste and Resource Efficiency.



Exam Results

For the third year in succession our school pupils achieved their best ever examination results at GCSE, achieving 65.1% against the key Level 2 Inclusive indicator (at least 5 number GCSE passes at grade A* to C including mathematics and language) with the outcomes of national literacy and numeracy tests at other key stages of education improving and comparing favourably with other authorities. This was the fifth consecutive year that improvement has been secured in the key examination results indicators.

Estyn School Inspections

During academic year 2015/16 Estyn inspected **15 Carmarthenshire Schools** (12 primary, 2 secondary and 1 Pupil Referral Unit). Of the 15 schools inspected; 2 schools were judged as having sector leading practice; 3 schools were judged as being good schools; 2 schools were placed in follow up category– LA Monitoring; 6 schools have been placed in follow up category Estyn Monitoring and 2 schools placed in follow up category Significant Improvement. Noted areas for improvement were that around half of the schools inspected need to focus on; further improve attainment to support higher judgements of 'standards' and further improve Leadership and Improving Quality.

Curriculum Enrichment

We have continued to provide a range of Curriculum enrichment experiences which have included the following examples.

Participation in reading and writing competitions such as; the Welsh Book Council Quiz 2015-16, where Ysgol Llannon won in the National Round for years 3 and 4; a new KS3 Book Quiz, with Year 9 pupils at Ysgol y Strade winning; Bookslam 2015-16, a Welsh Books Council reading competition, with Ysgol Glanyferri and Johnstown CP teams qualifying for the National Round; and Twenty 'More Able and Talented' KS3 pupils participating in our termly Sgwad Sgwennu Cymraeg' (Welsh Writing Squad).

The Welsh Heritage Schools Initiative invites schools across Wales to undertake heritage projects and to submit them for this nationwide heritage competition and this year was another successful year for schools in Carmarthenshire with six winning submissions.

This year the Scarlets partnership focused on e-books and the five Carmarthenshire Digital Pioneer schools looked at a different aspect of the Scarlets experience such as match day and the environmental impact of the stadium.

Carmarthenshire has been a Fair Trade county for nearly seven years. The schools in the county have contributed significantly to this achievement. Ninety schools are registered on the Fair Trade scheme with 20 schools having worked their way through the full programme and gained the Fair Trade flag.

The Healthy Schools Scheme

The Healthy Schools Scheme is now in its 13th year with a total of 113 schools participating. During this academic year a total of 4 schools were successful in completing another phase within the scheme. There are currently 4 Schools working towards Phase 2, 16 schools working towards Phase 3, 35 schools working towards Phase 4, 36 Schools working towards Phase 5 and 19 schools working towards the National Quality Award (NQA) which is the highest award achievable within the scheme.

Our Modernising Education Programme

Our Modernising Education Programme (MEP) continued apace, with major school development projects, valued at over **£20 million** including the completion of Ysgol Bro Dinefwr, Ysgol Maes y Gwendraeth, Ysgol Carreg Hirfaen, and Bryngwyn school, with thousands of children benefiting.

The vibrant school investment programme will continue over the next 12 months with some **£23 million** to be spent completing a project at Coedcae School, continuing major school development projects at Ysgol Penrhos (Seaside), Ysgol Trimsaran and St. John Lloyd School and commencing construction at Ysgol Llangadog, Ysgol Parc y Tywyn, Ysgol Dewi Sant, Ysgol Pontyberem, Ysgol Rhys Pritchard and Ysgol Rhydygors, whilst also continuing to develop a number of other projects in readiness for investment in the coming years.

We have also created Carmarthenshire's first Welsh Medium Secondary School (Bro Myrddin) and established a primary school to replace the last infants and Junior schools in the county with a new WM 3-11 Primary School at Llangennech.

Youth Service

The Youth Support Service has been involved in the delivery of the Enhanced Case Management (ECM) Test over the last 2 years; it is an approach to the supervision of young people who have offended, supported by the Youth Justice Board and Welsh Government. The approach based on the 'Trauma Recovery Model' has been evaluated by Cordis Bright. In Carmarthenshire (being one of 3 Youth Offending Teams involved across Wales) we have worked with the largest number of young people (11 young people) during the test.

The approach requires staff to have received training in the delivery of the model. In working with identified young people, practitioners go back to the very beginning of the young person's life; gather key information from parents/carers and relevant records and then attend a 'case formulation' meeting alongside their line manager with the ECM leads and develop a detailed timeline and an intervention plan. Practitioners also receive clinical supervision from the ECM Clinical Psychologist during the process. Within Carmarthenshire, practitioners have received this model very well and believe it to be a very effective way of engaging with young people towards change.



Music Service

The Music Service, which is a highly regarded and valued service both within the county and nationally, has certainly raised the profile of Carmarthenshire right across the UK. Recent performance highlights include; the Secondary Schools Girls Choir performing at the Music for Youth Proms at the Royal Albert Hall, and, at the start of April, winning the prestigious Côr Cymru competition under the baton of the talented musician, Islwyn Evans.

The Carmarthenshire County Orchestra has performed at the Symphony Hall, Birmingham in the Music for Youth Regional Finals and soon to perform the Premiere performance at the UN School by County Orchestra in New York, USA. The Carmarthen Music Service brass Ensemble performing at a BBC Radio Wales outside Broadcast.

Children's Services

We were the first Welsh local authority to have its children's services inspected by the CSSIW under the new inspection framework aligned to the expectations of the Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014 and received a very good judgement, with only a few relatively straightforward recommendations to address.

Embedding effective collaboration

As mentioned earlier in my report, the Education Department is engaged in a number of collaborative approaches. These include Regional approaches to Social Services and Education, and the Mid & West Wales Adoption Service covering Carmarthenshire, Pembrokeshire, Ceredigion and Powys. Through ERW (Education through Regional Working) we have a shared Head of School Effectiveness with Pembrokeshire. The strength of local partnership working to deliver the 14-19 curriculum continues to be sector-leading in Wales.



community services

The directorate for Communities is one of the largest departments in the authority employing nearly 1,600 people with overall spend of close to £144,000,000 of which nearly £50,000,000 is generated income. It is diverse department with services ranging from adult social care, environmental health, housing, museums and sports development.

Adult Social Care

Demand for adult social care provision is steadily growing across Wales. Historically the budget has overspent with requests for service from an ageing population outstripping the budgets available. With an over 85 population growing by 3% a year in the county there is an inevitability that in the medium to long term we will have to spend more on this service area. However our older person's strategy, launched last year, aimed to transform services through the development of community based provision and through a change in culture that recognises that over prescribing care to people leads to increased levels of frailty and the loss of independence. Our integrated health and social care service has enabled effective implementation of this strategy and meant that the department of Communities has now managed within its allocated budget for the second year in succession, bucking all national trends.

The implementation of our commissioning framework for domiciliary care has been a major contribution to managing resources better. Carmarthenshire implemented a framework for independent providers that ensures a greater emphasis of quality over cost, monitors providers call duration automatically and enables providers to use the hours more flexibly so calls to vulnerable people are not cut short. This framework has made us one of the most forward thinking authorities in Wales and has seen us working with the CSSIW to run national workshops to support other authorities in improving this challenging area. Over the last year we have also ended the further outsourcing of domiciliary care preferring instead to invest in our in house service. Over the next 12 months we expect to see a small increase in the proportion of domiciliary care provided by our in house service.

We will further increase the supply of extra care and nursing care through the delta lakes development, building on the success of the extra care developments in Ammanford and Carmarthen. We are retaining our current in house residential provision whilst considering what capital investment will be needed to improve the physical environments.

The departments new information advice and assessment team gives a single number 24 hours a day for social care advice and assistance and coupled with the decision to create a dedicated out of hours social work service will give us the best possible chance to get people the right help at the right time.

Adult Safeguarding is a priority and over the last year we have invested in a new structure for this service to improve response times and ensure that we have the capacity to prevent the abuse of vulnerable people. This has been a successful programme of change with improved response times enabling us to be confident that the most vulnerable people in the community are safer than ever.

Housing and Public Protection:

One in ten people in Carmarthenshire live in a council house. We are proud that we have been able to invest in these homes over many years so that they exceed the national home standard. This long term investment has given us the opportunity to invest in growing our housing stock, enabling more people to live in secure, affordable homes that are of a good standard. Our affordable homes strategy is ambitious and aims to increase the number of affordable homes by more than 1,000 in the next 5 years. I am delighted that we have exceeded the target in the last year and am proud that we have been buying homes from the open market back into the public sector at a rate of nearly one a week. Plans to start building homes again are now well advanced on a number of potential sites. The decision to create a housing company to further develop affordable housing should allow us to expand affordable housing across the county.

We have been concerned about the impact of benefit reforms on the affordability of rent and revised our monitoring and intervention programme to those tenants who fall behind in paying their rent. A multi-media campaign has encouraged those in difficulties with their rent to come forward for help early. This has dramatically reduced tenants rent arrears.

Finally our social letting agency goes from strength to strength with private sector landlords opting for us to manage their properties. This innovative scheme will improve standards in the private rented sector as well.

Leisure and Heritage

This year has been the start of an unprecedented level of investment in leisure and heritage. In our leisure centres the investment of nearly a million pounds in Gym refurbishments has seen user numbers soar and incomes rise as we now truly offer the best experience in the county. With extended opening hours and family membership now available to children aged 11 and over it costs less than £1.50 a day for a family to have unlimited access to pools, gyms and classes. This is great value and a real contribution to making Carmarthenshire's population healthy and active.

Finally we have made the commitment to invest more than £20,000,000 for a new leisure centre in Llanelli. With ambitions to include Wales only diving centre as part of the build this centre would be one of the main wellbeing attractions in Llanelli linking the coast with the town and providing the people of Llanelli with the best leisure facilities in the county.

Our library service is better used than ever and in the coming months we are proud to launch a new mobile service for our rural areas with three new vehicles. I was proud to see that Llanelli library lends the 3rd highest number of books of any library in the United Kingdom.

Our museums have suffered from a lack of investment over many years. It is a priority to improve this service and to this end a new museums strategy will be published later this year with plans for substantial investment in a new museum of speed in Pendine; The development of the grounds at the county museum in Abergwili (providing a gateway for the new cycle path in the Towy valley) and the ongoing development of the offer in Parc Howard. We have also commissioned a new archive service. This will include a £2,000,000 investment linked to Carmarthen library and will provide a state of the art home and access to the public for heritage documents that reflect the remarkable history of the county. This is a level of investment never seen before in our heritage and will provide a window into the counties history for future generations.



Conclusion

We have spent the last two years putting plans in place that will secure the regeneration of our county. Over the last two years I emphasised that we were not a stop gap administration and the plans and strategies we have implemented, compliment the vision that I shared with council members two years ago.

The next five years will see us delivering on these plans and strategies focussing fully on urban and rural regeneration and the ambition to safeguard and improve our front line services even in the face of ongoing cuts and a national austerity programme.

The new French President, Emmanuel Macron said recently that when politics is no longer a mission but a profession, politicians become more self-serving than public servants.

So let's all concentrate on the mission ahead. We have a public to represent, a vision to drive us forward, a task to complete and an ambition to realise. I look forward to this next five years as we move Carmarthenshire forward.