

Community Scrutiny Committee

Annual Report

2019 - 2020

Scrutiny
in Carmarthenshire



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Cyngor **Sir Gâr**
Carmarthenshire
County Council



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Chair's Foreword

As the Chair of this Committee, I am pleased to present this Annual Report for the Community Scrutiny Committee for the 2019/20 municipal year. This report provides a comprehensive summary of the work undertaken by the Committee during this period and provides an opportunity to reflect on this work.

The past year has continued to be a challenging period for the Council and I feel that this Committee has continued to constructively play its part in terms of scrutinising performance and contributing to key council policies and decisions.

The Committee discussed and scrutinised a wide variety of topics during the past year. These included the standard and regular monitoring reports as well as new policies and strategies being introduced by the County Council. However, its work programme was affected from the end of March 2020 by the Coronavirus pandemic which saw the cancellation of all Council meetings and the diversion of resources to other council services.

The forthcoming year will no doubt be challenging, and I am confident we will continue to focus on how to improve services effectively and efficiently.

I am looking forward to the challenge of chairing this Committee for 2020/21 and, with the assistance of my Vice Chair and the rest of the Committee, hope we will have a positive impact on the outcomes for the residents of Carmarthenshire.

I would also like to thank all members of the Committee for their contributions and dedication during 2019/20.



Councillor Fozia Akhtar
Chair of Community Scrutiny Committee

1. Introduction

Article 6.2 of the Council's Constitution requires all scrutiny committees to "*prepare an annual report giving an account of the Committees activities over the previous year.*"

The main aims of the report are to highlight the work that has been undertaken by the Community Scrutiny Committee during 2019/20. It outlines the potential future work of the Committee. The document may also facilitate discussions on other items that could be included within future work programmes.

The Committee is chaired by Cllr. Fozia Akhtar and is made up of 13 Elected Members. Support is provided to the Panel by the Democratic Services Team and other Council officers as and when required.

This report provides an overview of the work of the Community Scrutiny Committee during the 2019/20 municipal year. It gives Members the opportunity to reflect on the achievements during the year and to identify what worked well and where improvements could be made. This analysis is instrumental in developing scrutiny

2. Overview of the work of the Committee in 2019/20

2.1 Number of Meetings

The Scrutiny Committee held 6 meetings during the 2019/20 municipal year.

2.2 The Forward Work Programme

The Scrutiny Committee develops its own Forward Work Programme (FWP) and in the main, meeting agendas were consistent with those outlined in the FWP, which was confirmed by the Committee at its meeting on 9th May 2019.

The Forward Work Programme was mainly based on key areas identified as objectives within the Integrated Community Strategy and Improvement Plan together with standard items such as performance and budget monitoring reports, action plan monitoring reports and specific requests from the scrutiny committee itself. Additional reports were also requested by the scrutiny committee during the year and the Forward Work Programme was amended accordingly.

The development of the concept of the Forward Work Programme and the process for its agreement, has allowed each scrutiny committee to determine its own work agendas. The benefits of such an approach has led to an improved level of debate and input during scrutiny committee meetings.

The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 put long term sustainability at the forefront of how public services are designed and delivered and it places emphasis on public bodies to work in partnership with each other and the public to prevent and tackle problems.

The Community Scrutiny Committee's key responsibilities are for:

- Housing – Social and Private Sector
- Planning Policy
- Community Regeneration including physical and rural development
- Economic Development
- European and Externally Funded Programmes
- Libraries
- Arts and Theatres
- Museums and Archives
- Countryside facilities
- Sports, Leisure and Recreation

To compliment the work undertaken during formal meetings, the Committee also undertakes other scrutiny functions such as task and finish, visits to establishments falling within its remit together with member development sessions

2.3 Performance Monitoring / Strategic Issues

Performance Monitoring Reports - One of the principal roles of Scrutiny Committees is to monitor the performance of services and functions within its remit. They undertake this work mainly through the consideration of performance monitoring reports and various action plan monitoring reports. The performance monitoring reports provide a balanced picture of performance across the relevant service areas. The Community Scrutiny Committee received the Performance Monitoring Report for the Council's 2018/19 Wellbeing Objectives at the meeting in October 2019. The reports mainly focussed on underperforming indicators.

Carmarthenshire County Council's Draft Annual Report 2018/19 - As part of its performance monitoring role the Committee received relevant information from the Council's key strategies and plans. One of the key areas relating to the Council's management is the production of an annual report presenting a prime opportunity for review, monitoring and reflection and enabling it to capture on-going activity in meeting its general and specific duties. With that in mind, the Committee in June 2019 considered the Council's draft Annual Report for 2018/19 which included an overview of performance progress reports for all 15 Well-being objectives including those areas falling within its remit. The report had been produced in accordance with the requirements of both the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2009 and the Well-Being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and provided:-

- An overview of the 2018/19 performance
- Two page progress reports for each of the 15 Well-being Objectives
- A link to track progress on every specific action and target set for each Well-being Objective
- Within the report appendices, other performance information on out-turn data

Outcome:

The Council approved the 2018/19 Annual report at its meeting in October 2019

Departmental Draft Business Plans 2020 - 2023 – In January the Committee considered the Departmental Draft Business Plans 2020 - 2023 for those area of the Communities, Chief Executive and Environment Departments falling within its remit which detailed each of the department's aims, objectives and priorities during that period. This provided the Committee with an opportunity to consider and comment upon the priorities outlined for the departments for the three year period.

Actions & Referrals - During the course of the municipal year several requests for additional items are made by members of the Committee to assist them in discharging their scrutiny role. Actions & Referrals updates are presented to Committee which provide an update on progress in relation to these requests.

2.4 Revenue & Capital Budgets

Budget Monitoring Reports - The Committee received quarterly reports on the departmental and corporate revenue and capital budgets at the meetings held in October, November and January. These reports enabled members to monitor the level of spend in each area and the progress made in connection with any capital works.

Revenue Budget Strategy Consultation 2020/21-2022/23 - As well as monitoring the current budget, the Committee was also consulted on the Revenue Budget Strategy 2020/21 to 2022/23. The report provided the Committee with the current proposals for the Revenue Budget Strategy for 2020/21 together with the indicative figures for the 2020/21 and 2022/2023 financial years.

Outcome:

As part of the widespread consultation undertaken on the Revenue Budget Strategy 2020/21 to 2022/23, the Community Scrutiny Committee considered the budget proposals and requested the Executive Board to fund the estimated £150k cost to primary schools of providing school swimming lessons. However, that was not progressed as part of the budget proposals adopted by the Council at its meeting in March 2020

With regard to the Five Year Capital Programme 2020/21 – 2024/25, Council at its meeting in March 2020 noted that within the Communities Department new funding had been provided for the redevelopment of Oriel Myrddin and for Carmarthen Leisure Centre. The Council also noted the incorporation within the Regeneration and Chief Executive's budgets for the provision of a new Leisure Centre in Llanelli as a key component of the Wellness Village Development proposals.

2.5 Building More Council Homes – Our Ambition and Plan of Action

In July 2019, the Committee considered a report on the Council's proposals to adopt a transformational Building Plan to deliver in excess of 900 new council homes over a 10 year period. That report provided detailed information and proposed recommendations in relation to the following:-

- Where and when the homes would be built;
- The resources available and delivery models
- How wider regeneration priorities across the county would be supported
- How new opportunities would be maximised as they arose.

A fundamental element of the report was to provide 300 new homes in the programmes' first three years with an investment of £53m. Subsequent to the report's adoption, building works had commenced on two schemes at Garreglwyd, Pembrey (14 homes) and Dylan, Bynea (34 homes) providing 48 new homes. Further works planned for 2020 included 3 sites at Glanmor Terrace, Burry Port (32 homes), Gwynfryn, Ammanford (28 homes) and Maespiode, Llandybie (8 homes) providing 68 new homes in total.

Outcome:

The Executive Board and Council at their meetings held in July and September 2019 endorsed the report recommendations.

2.6 Draft Carmarthenshire County Council's Annual Report for 2018/19

As referenced in 2.3 above, the Committee in July 2019 considered the Council's Draft Annual Report for 2018/19. In endorsing that report, the Committee referenced the potential benefits that could accrue if the Council were to introduce fishing permits for waters under its control.

The Committee recommended to the Executive Board/ Council that the Annual Report be endorsed. It also requested the potential for promoting fishing opportunities across the County to be explored

Outcome:

The Annual Report was endorsed by the Executive Board and Council at their meetings in September and October 2019 respectively.

The Committee received an update on the introduction of fishing permits at a Development Session held in November, 2019

2.7 Annual Monitoring Report 2018/19 Adopted Carmarthenshire Local Development Plan

In October 2019, the Committee received the above plan, being the fourth to be produced in accordance with the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act

2004 and the Local Development (LDP) Regulations 2016 requiring local authorities to submit their Annual Monitoring Reports to the Welsh Government by the 31st October in each year

The Committee debated a wide range of issues relevant to the plan's operation. Those included:-

- The designation of Air Quality Management Areas in Llandeilo, Carmarthen and Llanelli,
- The emerging role of Place Plans through the Positive Planning Agenda and Planning (Wales) Act 2015

The Committee endorsed the report for submission to the Executive Board and Council for approval, prior to onward submission to the Welsh Government.

Outcome:

The Executive Board and Council at their meetings held in September and October 2019 approved the annual report for submission to the Welsh Government by the 31st October.

2.8 Complaints and Compliments Annual Report 2018/19

The Committee, in October 2019, received and endorsed the Council's Annual Complaints and Compliments Report for 2018/19 paying specific attention to Sections 10.4 and 10.6 of the report relevant to its remit.

The report detailed a number of key factors that included:-

- The number of complaints investigated and responded to between April 2018 and March 2019, by department
- Complaints determined by the Ombudsman
- Summary of Councillor Enquiries

Outcome:

The Committee received the Annual report.

2.9 Annual Performance Report 2018/19 (Planning)

In October 2019 the Committee considered the Authority's fourth Annual Performance Report on Planning for the period April 2018-March 2019, produced in accordance with the requirements of the Planning Performance Framework Table, for submission to the Welsh Government by the 31st October.

The Committee debated a wide range of issues relevant to the Division's performance. Those included:

- Actual Income levels received from planning fees failing to meet target budgets,

- The increase in the average number of days taken to determine planning applications

Outcome:

The report was received and forwarded to the Welsh Government by the 31st October, 2019 deadline.

2.10 Revised Carmarthenshire Local Development Plan 2018-2033 – Draft Deposit

In October 2019 the Committee was consulted on the Council's Revised Carmarthenshire Local Development Plan 2018-2033 Draft Deposit

The Committee discussed a wide range of issues relative to the Deposit Draft which included:-

- The supporting of development plans that would contribute to the sustainability of rural communities.
- the increase in migration levels, particularly in the 30-44 age group
- the potential number of candidate sites to be included in the plan
- the use of redundant railway corridors
- the determination of plans submitted under the existing LDP as the Revised Plan progressed to adoption
- renewable energy policies
- the inclusion within the Draft Deposit of the Council's proposals to build 900 new homes over a 10 year period

The Committee endorsed the Draft Deposit for public consultation

Outcome:

The Executive Board and Council at their meetings in October and November 2019 approved the Draft Deposit for formal consultation

2.11 Universal Credit Full Service Update for Carmarthenshire

In November 2019 the Committee, in accordance with its decision in February 2019 received a presentation on the roll-out of Universal Credit within Carmarthenshire. The presentation was provided by the Council's Homes and Safer Communities Division together with representatives from the Department for Work and Pensions and Carmarthenshire Citizen's Advice.

The Committee discussed a number of issues arising from the presentations including the:-

- increased use of food banks
- increase in rent arrears
- support available for armed forces veterans
- numbers of rough sleepers

Outcome:

The Committee received the presentation and requested arrangements be made for a members' seminar to be convened on the roll out of Universal Credit within Carmarthenshire. That seminar was scheduled to be held on the 8th April, 2020, but deferred to a future date due to the Coronavirus pandemic

2.12 Council Tenant Survey (STAR) Results 2019

In January 2020, the Committee received the results of the 2019 Council Tenant Survey commissioned by the Authority and undertaken by ARP Research. Some 5,000 tenants were surveyed with over 2,000 responses received. The key satisfaction rates were noted as being:

- 82% with the council's services
- 79% with the quality of homes
- 77% value for money of rent
- 67% value for money of services charge
- 64% listening and acts on views
- 75% repairs and maintenance overall
- 79% completed last repair
- 85% neighbourhood as a place to live
- 66% grounds maintenance service
- 58% deals with ant-social behaviour

Outcome:

The Committee received the report.

2.13 Welsh Public Library Standards 2017-2020

In January 2020 the Committee received the Welsh Government's assessment on the operation of Carmarthenshire's Library Service for 2018/19. It was noted that the Service met all of its 12 core entitlements in full.

Outcome:

The report was received

2.14 Housing Revenue Account and Housing Rent Setting 2020/21

In February 2020, the Committee considered the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Budget and Housing Rent Setting for 2020/21, presented as part of the budget consultation process. The report reflected the latest proposals contained in the Housing Revenue Account Business Plan, being the primary financial planning tool for delivering the Carmarthenshire Homes Standard Plus (CHS+).

The Committee raised a number of issues on the report that included: rent arrears arising from the introduction of Universal Credit, void losses, and the decarbonisation of council homes, both existing and new, in line with the Council's commitment to be net carbon zero by 2030 and Welsh and National

U.K. Government targets on carbon emission reductions. The Committee endorsed the report and proposed rent increases to the Executive Board and Council for consideration as part of the budget submission to the Council

Outcome:

The budget Housing Rent setting proposals were adopted by the Executive Board and Council at their meetings in February and March, 2020 respectively

2.15 The Carmarthenshire Homes Standard Plus (CHS+) 'Delivering what matters'

In February 2020, the Committee considered the Carmarthenshire Homes Standard Plus (CHS+) Programme Plan for 2020-2023. Members were advised of the plan's three key aims to:

- explain its provision over the next three year and what it meant for tenants
- confirm the financial profile based on current assumptions for delivery over the plan period
- Produce a business plan for the annual application to the Welsh Government for Major Repairs Allowance for 2017/18 equating to £6.1m

Outcome:

The report was accepted by the Executive Board and Council at their meetings in February and March 2020 respectively.

2.16 Task and Finish

"A review on the provision of Affordable Bungalows within Carmarthenshire"

The Committee previously agreed to undertake a task and finish review on the provision of Affordable Bungalows within Carmarthenshire. The Group met five times considering a wide range of issues and information on the provision of Council social housing. Having evaluated all the information presented to it on the diversity of the Council's housing provision and the equally diverse needs of tenants, the Group concluded it was not possible to identify a rationale for meeting demand for a single house type above other demands and agreed the review should not progress to a full report.

The Group initially comprised the following.

- Cllr. Sharen Davies (Chair)
- Cllr. Irfon Jones
- Cllr. Gareth Thomas (Vice Chair)
- Cllr. Deryk Cundy
- Cllr. Jeanette Gilasbey
- Cllr. Betsan Jones

2.17 Site Visits

The Committee, as part of its 2019/20 Forward Work Programme, undertook site visits to the following.

St Clears Leisure Centre - located within the community of St Clears the leisure centre had visitor levels of circa 40,000 p.a. and was one of several centres owned and operated by Carmarthenshire County Council. The Committee viewed the centres facilities and condition and noted that proposals were being examined for future investment to increased participation levels.

Y Gat, St Clears – situated in Station Road, St Clears was constructed in the middle of the 19th Century as a mill and is currently used as a craft and community centre operating over three floors.

Pendine Outdoor Education Centre – located close to Pendine Beach, the Centre provides residential activity packages for young children, traditionally school groups, for up to five days from Monday – Friday undertaking a programme of outdoor pursuits and environmental studies linked within the school curriculum

The Committee viewed the condition of the centre's infrastructure and noted work was being undertaken on evaluating its future usage and potential investment requirements.

Outcome:

The Committee noted reviews were being undertaken on future delivery options for all three premises and those would be reported in 2020/21

2.18 Development Sessions

The Committee held a development session in November 2019 where it received presentations on:-

1. Fishing Licences:-

Covering the development of community fishing specifically in areas of water/waterways under the council's control where fishing could take place and the measures necessary to be introduced to allow for that use

2. Nant y Ci Livestock Market:-

Providing an update on the operation of the Mart

The following member development sessions / member seminars were held during 2019/20:-

- Mod.Gov training (Delivered by Civica) – May
- Swansea Bay City Deal Seminar – June
- County Lines & Counter Terrorism Seminar – June
- Conservation & Biodiversity Seminar – June

- Life Science & Wellbeing Village Seminar – July
- Code of Conduct Training – July
- Canfod Cartref – July
- Carmarthenshire 50+ Annual Forum Event – September
- Education Grants - October
- Schools Budget – November
- Digital Connectivity Seminar – December
- Net Zero Carbon Plan Seminar – January
- Dyfed Pension Fund Governance & Investments - March

In addition to the above, several departmental budget seminars were held during November/December 2019 as part of the Council's consultation process on the 2020/21 Revenue Budget and the five year capital programme.

2.19 Referrals

The Committee made one referral during 2019/20 to the Executive Board, as part of the 2020/21 Revenue Budget consultations, requesting it fund the estimated £150k cost to primary schools of providing swimming lessons as part of the Key Stage 2 Curriculum, with the cost being met from the £293k unallocated contingency within the budget strategy. The request was not progressed as part of the Budget

3. Challenges

Following a review of its membership in the early part of 2019 the new members worked with the rest of the Committee to face a challenging year addressing a wide range of topics, both corporate and service specific to its remit, contributing to, and commenting on their performance and delivery to achieve improved service delivery.

4. Future Work

The Committee has made significant progress and will continue to concentrate on topics where Members' input will result in positive outcomes to drive forward service improvement. To ensure best use is being made of meeting time and with the benefit of the added value of pre-meetings, the Committee is keen to achieve a more streamlined scrutiny process.

The future work of the Committee will be considered as part of the Forward Work Programme planning session. The FWP will continue to be monitored during the course of the year, together with the Executive Board FWP.

5. Support for the Scrutiny Function

Support for Carmarthenshire County Council's Scrutiny function is provided by the Democratic Services Unit, based in the Administration & Law Division of the Chief Executive's Department.

Support for the Scrutiny function includes:

- Formulating, in accordance with the FWP, and despatching agendas for Scrutiny Committee meetings a minimum of 4 working days prior to the meeting;
- Providing support and constitutional advice to the Scrutiny Committees and to members of those Committees as well as producing minutes of their meetings and ensuring items arising from those meetings are actioned;
- Giving support and advice in relation to the functions of the Council's Scrutiny Committees to executive and non-executive members of the Council and its officers;
- Managing the strategic development of Scrutiny in Carmarthenshire through engaging in national and regional Scrutiny networks and initiatives, supporting the Chairs and Vice-Chairs of Scrutiny Forum and meetings of the Scrutiny Chairs and Vice-Chairs with the Executive Board;
- Advising and supporting the implementation of the requirements of the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011 as and when guidance is published;
- Managing the co-ordination and development of the Scrutiny Committees' forward work programmes in conjunction with Scrutiny Committee members;
- Managing and co-ordinating Scrutiny review work, including the administration of scrutiny task and finish groups, assisting in writing reports in conjunction with the groups and assisting in the implementation and monitoring of completed reviews;
- Assisting with the Scrutiny member development programme.

For more information on Scrutiny in Carmarthenshire including forward work programmes, task and finish reports and annual reports, visit the County Council's website at: www.carmarthenshire.gov.wales/scrutiny

To contact the Democratic Services Unit, please call 01267 224028 or e-mail scrutiny@carmarthenshire.gov.uk

6. Attendance

Attendance by members of the Community Scrutiny Committee during the 2019/20 year is shown in the table below. A total of 6 meetings were held between 1st May 2019 and 30th April 2020 against the scheduled 7, with the April 2020 meeting having been cancelled due to the coronavirus pandemic.

Scrutiny Committee Member	No. of meetings attended	%
Cllr F. Akhtar	5	83
Cllr. Ann. Davies	4	67
Cllr. Anthony Davies	4	67
Cllr. H. Davies	6	100

Cllr C. Evans	2	33
Cllr R. Evans	6	100
Cllr. J. Gilasbey	6	100
Cllr. B. Jones	5	83
Cllr. H. Jones	5	83
Cllr. S. Matthews	5	83
Cllr. H. Shepardson	6	100
Cllr A. Speake (from 8 th January 2020)	2	33
Cllr. G. Thomas	5	83
Cllr. A. Vaughan Owen (up to 8 th January 2020)	2	33
Substitutes	No. of meetings attended	
Cllr S.M. Allen	2	
Cllr M. Charles	1	
Cllr. W.T.Evans	3	
Cllr. M.J.A. Lewis	1	
Cllr K. Lloyd	1	
Executive Board Member	No. of meetings attended	
Cllr E. Dole	2	
Cllr. L.D. Evans	6	
Cllr. M. Stephens	1	
Cllr. P.H. Griffiths	3	
Cllr D. Jenkins	3	