

Policy and Resources Scrutiny Committee

Annual Report

2019 - 2020

Scrutiny
in Carmarthenshire



carmarthenshire.gov.uk

Cyngor **Sir Gâr**
Carmarthenshire
County Council



Contents

Section	Item	Page
	Chair's Foreword	2
1	Introduction	3
2	Overview of the work of the Committee 2019/20	3
3	Other Scrutiny Activity	6
4	Challenges	7
5	Future Work	7
6	Support for the Scrutiny Function	7
7	Attendance	8

Chair's Foreword

As the Chair of this Committee, I am pleased to present this Annual Report for the Policy & Resources 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.

The forthcoming year will no doubt be challenging, but I am confident that we will continue to focus on how to improve services effectively and efficiently. The Well-being of Future Generations Act (Wales) 2015 established Public Service Boards (PSB) and this Committee has been designated to scrutinise this work. The aims of the Act are to improve the social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales. During 2020/21 the Committee will continue to develop its role to ensure that Carmarthenshire's PSB is held democratically accountable.

I am looking forward, once again, to the challenge of chairing this Committee 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. We will continue to work closely with the Council's senior managers and staff to ensure that it is a productive year ahead.

As Chair of the Committee, I also Chair the Chairs and Vice Chairs of Scrutiny Forum which discusses improvements to the scrutiny function for consideration by the Council's Constitutional Review Working Group and acts as a forum for sharing and disseminating scrutiny good practice. We have concentrated this year on effectiveness of scrutiny committee pre-meetings, identifying scrutiny training for officers and members, scrutiny committee good practice, paperless meetings and promoting the mod.gov app. Arrangements were put in place in December 2019/January 2020 to assess the effectiveness and impact of overview and scrutiny, and members were asked to complete a self-evaluation questionnaire. The Chairs and Vice-Chairs Forum received the result of the survey in January 2020 and whilst the lack of engagement by members in the self-evaluation process was disappointing, analysis of the results showed that the majority of the respondents were satisfied with Carmarthenshire's Scrutiny function and how each Committee managed its scrutiny role. The Chairs and Vice Forum agreed to undertake a further survey in January 2021.

On a final note I would like to thank all members of the Committee and officers for their contributions and dedication during 2019/20.

Cllr. Giles Morgan
Chair of Policy and Resources 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 Committee's activities over the previous year.*"

The main aims of the report are to highlight the work that has been undertaken by the Policy and Resources 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. Giles Morgan 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 Policy and Resources Scrutiny Committee during 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 2019/20

2.1 Number of Meetings

The Scrutiny Committee held 5 meetings in the 2019/20 Civic Year. The meetings scheduled for February and March 2020 were cancelled [the latter due to the Coronavirus pandemic].

2.2 The Work Programme

The Scrutiny Committee develops its own Forward Work Programme (FWP) and in the main, meeting agendas were consistent with those outlined by the FWP, which was confirmed by the Committee at its meeting on 26th April 2019.

The Forward Work Programme (FWP) was mainly based on key areas identified as objectives within the Council's Corporate Strategy 2018-23 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 Act established Public Service Boards (PSB) for each Local Authority in Wales.

To ensure that PSBs are democratically accountable there was a requirement on Councils to designate an overview and scrutiny committee to scrutinise the work of the PSB. As the Council's designated Scrutiny Committee in this regard the Policy & Resources Scrutiny Committee has continued in its role of scrutinising the work of the PSB and holding it to account on its performance in meeting the objectives of the Local Well-Being Plan. In this regard the Committee regularly received the minutes of meetings of the PSB.

The following sections will provide a snapshot of the main areas of the Committee's work.

2.3 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 report provides a balanced picture of performance across the relevant service areas. The Policy & Resources Scrutiny Committee received these reports at its meetings in October 2019 and March 2020. The reports mainly focus on underperforming indicators.

As part of its performance management role the Committee receives relevant information from the Council's key strategies and plans. The Committee considered and endorsed the Council's Draft Annual Report (2018/19) at its meeting in July 2019. Annual reporting was one of the prime opportunities for review, monitoring and reflection and an opportunity for the authority to capture its on-going activity around meeting its general and specific duties. It also noted that the Council was held by law to publish an Annual Report on past performance by the end of October each year.

Outcome:

County Council approved the Council's Annual Report for 2018/19.

2.4 Revenue & Capital Budgets

The Committee received quarterly reports on the departmental and corporate revenue and capital budgets. These reports enabled members to monitor the level of spend in each area and the progress made in any capital works.

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 for 2020/21 together with the indicative figures for the 2021/22 and 2022/23 financial years.

Members accepted the report and endorsed the Charging Digest.

The Committee was consulted on the Five -Year Capital Programme 2020/21 - 2023/24.

Outcome:

County Council approved the Revenue Budget Strategy and the Five-Year Capital Programme.

2.5 Treasury Management and Prudential Indicator Reports

The Committee received updates outlining the activities within the Treasury Management Function, in line with the requirements of the Treasury Management Policy and Strategy approved by the County Council on the 20th February 2019.

2.6 2019/20 Departmental and Corporate 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 half-yearly performance monitoring reports and various action plan monitoring reports. The performance monitoring report provides a balanced picture of performance across the relevant service areas. The Committee considered the performance reports for its remit at its meetings in October 2019 and March 2020.

2.7 Sickness Absence Monitoring

In June 2019 the Committee considered a report on Sickness Absence Monitoring end of Year 2018/19 which detailed departmental sickness absence data for the 2018/19 financial year along with benchmarking and performance ranking tables. The report also included a breakdown of the key causes for absence to enable the Committee to scrutinise the council's performance in relation to managing attendance. One of the outcomes of the report was the extension of invitations to elected members to attend Mental Health First Aid Training.

In December 2019 the Committee considered a half-year [Quarter 2] report on Sickness Absence Monitoring for 2019/20 which showed a continuing downward trend compared to Quarter 2 2017/18.

2.8 Carmarthenshire Public Services Board (PSB)

In June and October 2019 and January and March 2020 the Committee, as the designated scrutiny committee appointed to scrutinise the work of the PSB, considered the minutes of meetings of the Carmarthenshire Public Services Board. Members of the Scrutiny Committee again had the opportunity of attending PSB Meetings as observers.

In June 2019 the Committee considered the Carmarthenshire Public Services Board Well-Being Plan Annual Report 2018-19. The Chair of the PSB assured the Committee that there was an equal commitment from all partners represented on the Board.

2.9 Annual Report 2018/19 on the Welsh language

In July 2019 the Committee considered the Annual Report in relation to the Welsh language and compliance with the Welsh Language Standards during 2018-19. The Report had been produced in order to comply with the Welsh Language Commissioner's monitoring arrangements.

2.10 Digital Schools Strategy Annual Report 2019

In July 2019 the Committee considered and endorsed the Digital Schools Strategy Annual Report 2019.

2.11 Digital Transformation Strategy and Digital Technology Strategy Annual Report 2019

In July 2019 the Committee considered and endorsed the Digital Transformation Strategy and Digital Technology Strategy Annual Report 2019.

2.12 Strategic Equality Plan Annual Report 2018-19

In July 2019 the Committee considered the Strategic Equality Plan Annual Report 2018-19 which detailed how the Council had implemented its Strategic Equality Plan and fulfilled its duties under the Equality Act 2010 and the Specific Duties for Wales.

2.13 Complaints & Compliments Annual Report 2018/19

In October 2019 the Committee received the Complaints & Compliments Annual Report 2018/19.

2.14 Transform, Innovate & Change (TIC) Programme Annual Report 2018/19

In December 2019 the Committee received the 'Transform, Innovate & Change (TIC) Programme Annual Report 2018/19.

2.15 Llanelli Wellness and Life Science Village

The Committee received an update on the proposed Llanelli Wellness and Life Science Village at its meeting in December 2019.

3. Other Scrutiny Activity

3.1 Task and Finish

The Committee did not undertake a task and finish review during 2019/20.

3.2 Site Visits

The Committee did not undertake any site visits during 2019/20.

3.3 Development Sessions

The following all-member development sessions /seminars were held during 2019/20, to which Committee members were invited:

- 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, there were several departmental budget seminars held.

The Committee also visited the occupational health unit which was followed by an informal session on HR.

4. Challenges

In undertaking its work the Committee has faced several challenges, which have included items not being reported in line with the FWP, level of detail in reports – sometimes too much detail sometimes too little.

5. Future Work

The Committee has made significant progress and will continue to concentrate on topics where Member's input will result in positive outcomes to drive forward service improvement. The future work of the Committee will be detailed in its Forward Work Programme which will continue to be monitored during the course of the forthcoming year.

6. 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. This includes:

- Providing support and constitutional advice to the Council's 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 the Scrutiny Chairs and Vice-Chairs Executive Board Forum;
- Advising and supporting the implementation of the requirements of the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011 as guidance is published;
- Managing the co-ordination and development of the Scrutiny forward work programmes in conjunction with Scrutiny members;
- Managing and co-ordinating Scrutiny review work, including the operation of scrutiny task and finish groups, authoring reports in conjunction with the groups, and assisting in the implementation and monitoring of completed reviews;
- Managing the Scrutiny member development programme;

- Despatching agendas for Scrutiny Committee meetings a minimum of 4 working days prior to the meeting.

For more information on scrutiny in Carmarthenshire including 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

7. Attendance

Attendance by members of the Policy and Resources Scrutiny Committee during the 2019/20 year is shown in the table below. A total of 5 meetings out of the planned 7 were held between June 2019 and March 2020 – the meetings scheduled for February and March 2020 being cancelled [the latter due to the Coronavirus pandemic].

Scrutiny Committee Member	No. of meetings attended out of possible 5	%
Cllr. S.M. Allen	3	60%
Cllr. K. Broom	5	100%
Cllr. D. Cundy	4	80%
Cllr. H. Davies	5	100%
Cllr. T.A.J. Davies	5	100%
Cllr. J. Edmunds	2	40%
Cllr. J. K. Howell	5	100%
Cllr. G.H. John	5	100%
Cllr. A.C. Jones	5	100%
Cllr. K. Madge	4	80%
Cllr. A.G. Morgan	5	100%
Cllr. J. G. Prosser	4	80%
Cllr. D.E. Williams	3	60%
Substitutes	No. of meetings attended	
Cllr. J. Gilasby	1	
Cllr. G.R. Jones	2	
Cllr. W.T. Evans	1	

Executive Board Member	No. of meetings attended
Cllr E. Dole	1
Cllr. M. Stephens	2
Cllr D. Jenkins	3

8. Glossary of Terms

CIPFA - The Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy

PSB - Public Service Board

FWP - Forward Work Programme

TIC - Transform, Innovate & Change

WCFG – Wellbeing of Future Generations Act (Wales) 2015

DRAFT